

**BRIDGING THE POLICY GAPS: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR TRANSGENDER  
COMMUNITY OF PAKISTAN**

Haleema Sadia and Ezalfa Asif

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## 1. INTRODUCTION:

A person whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the social norms and cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at the time of their birth is a transgender person (Transgender Persons Act, 2018). In Pakistan, other terms such as *Khawaja Sira*, *Hijra*, *Zenana*, *Khusra*, and *Murat* are also used under the umbrella of “transgender” (Rashid, Rashid, 2020).

Despite Pakistan’s constitutional commitment to education for all, the transgender community of Pakistan is still deprived of this basic right due to being overlooked by society (Majid et al., 2023) and government (Fahad et al., 2021). This research adds to the already existing body of knowledge by addressing the failure of Pakistan’s policies to specify the unique educational needs of transgender community and therefore, leaving significant gaps in implementation (Arqum, 2023).

It aims to investigate the impact of public awareness in the effective policy implementation, and the barriers in the education access to transgenders. It addresses the need for inclusive educational settings for transgender people, by exploring how Pakistani educational institutions can better accommodate and empower the community.

By reflecting on both international models and local initiatives, this study seeks to highlight these gaps through a cross-national policy transfer, in order to provide practical solutions for improving transgender people’s access to inclusive education in Pakistan. It engages with the transgender community, transgender activists, psychologists, policy experts, legal practitioners, and educationists to gain diverse perspectives on evaluating the policy gaps, and proposing effective strategies for inclusive education.

**KEYWORDS:** *Transgender person, Pakistan, Inclusive education, Access, Transgender Persons Act 2018, Public Awareness, Policy Implementation, Barriers, Discrimination, Social Norms, Governmental Neglect, Solutions, Cross-National Policy Transfer, Global Policies.*

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:**

- This research will look at how well transgender students in Lahore, Pakistan can access inclusive quality education.
- It will focus on the challenges that transgenders living in Punjab face in educational settings.
- It will focus on how inclusive education policies for transgenders should be made/reformed explicitly and implemented with an emphasis on cross-national policy transfer presented in the literature review. The interviewees' responses will also provide insights and recommendations for this objective.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Pakistan is home to 20,331 transgender people out of which only 1.02% students have been able to enroll in secondary education (7th Population and Housing Census, 2023). With a literacy rate of only 40%, this census highlights the neglect transgender people have been facing when it comes to implementation of explicit educational policies and resource allocation (7th Population and Housing Census, 2023). This data is crucial for understanding their socio-economic conditions by comparison of their enrollment rates with other two cis-normative genders, which is 60.65% combined (of men and women). This gap reflects the barriers transgenders face when it comes to their access to education (Noon, 2022). It also highlights that although Pakistan does have laws regarding Transgender rights (Transgender Persons Act, 2018), but unfortunately, there is a notable absence in explicit policies that address the educational

needs of transgenders, whether through specialized or inclusive schooling (Noreen, & Rashid, 2024). Another major barrier is the weak enforcement mechanism of policies. Social stigma against transgender community, lack of awareness, inconsistent legal enforcement, limited governmental support and funding, and insufficient infrastructure contributes to this barrier (Ansari, 2023). We need equal contribution from Pakistani society and government to overcome these hurdles.

By examining global examples of effective policies, such as India's National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, Pakistan can address the disconnect in its policy framework to create a more inclusive environment for the transgender community. The cross-national policy transfer is particularly instructive as it allows borrowing of India's NEP 2020 to serve as a model that could inspire similar reforms in Pakistan, even if the policy and law types differ. As neighboring countries, Pakistan and India share a mutual historical and socio-cultural background as well as a significant population of Muslims (Akhter, 2016). This religious and socio-cultural backdrop shapes their similar societal norms, attitudes and perspectives toward the gender roles and the marginalized communities such as transgender individuals. Despite constitutional protections, transgender individuals in both countries struggle with access to education due to weak enforcement of inclusive policies. Educators often lack awareness and training on gender diversity, leading to exclusionary classroom environments. Additionally, public sector schools in both nations suffer from insufficient funding and infrastructure to accommodate transgender students (Suleman et al., 2024) which influences the way policies are designed and implemented.

India's progressive approach towards inclusive education provides a valuable insight into explicitly addressing the special educational needs and planning active strategies for a supportive, respectful, and inclusive environment for the marginalized groups, including the

transgender community (Ministry of Education, 2020). While Pakistan's *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018* provides a broad spectrum of rights for the transgender community, including access to education, it fails to specify the gender-sensitive educational reforms, curricula, infrastructure, and strategies for effective implementation. In comparison, India's NEP 2020, addresses inclusive curricula with adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach. This approach aims to establish a flexible learning environment that accommodates individual learning differences by providing multiple means of engagement, expression, and representation so that all students can access and engage with the curricula. The NEP mandates that all institutes provide barrier-free access and provide accessible infrastructure and learning materials. It also includes strict measures against bullying, harassment, discrimination, and sexism, and ensures the provision of access to special resources centers, counseling, and therapy services for the students, to create a safe environment. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of continuous pedagogical training with a focus on inclusivity, so that educators know how to deal with students with diverse sexual orientations. Where Pakistan's *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018* also lacks targeted funding for transgender's inclusive education, India's NEP 2020 includes Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF), and its implementation plans as well.

Although NEP has not been fully implemented, it includes effective strategies for implementation such as collaboration between governmental and non-governmental departments, allocation of adequate resources and funds, and regular monitoring of the implementation process. As Pakistan is still struggling to provide equitable access to safe and quality education to its transgender community (Pirzada, Khatoon, Khatoon, & Gull, 2022), inclusion of India's NEP 2020's detailed framework can help identify the absence of similar mechanisms in

Pakistan's education policies for transgender community. By this cross-national policy transfer, the literature review aims to highlight how rights-based practical approaches can go beyond legal recognition to active implementation that creates supportive, and inclusive educational environments. Pakistan can reform and modify its policies by borrowing some of the key elements of India's framework.

The most important part of NEP 2020 is the application of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach that allows for a flexible learning environment due to diversified learning needs. Applying UDL principles in the education policy of Pakistan can empower transgender students to meaningfully interact with curricula. This can be done through the development of inclusive course material, gender-sensitive teaching strategies, and comprehensive training of educators toward the development of supportive learning environments. Routine teacher training programs on gender diversity and inclusive pedagogy also have to be part of the reforms in making a safe learning environment for all, supporting the transgender students both academically and emotionally. Transgender identities should be positively represented in the learning material and schools provided with resources sensitive to diversity, accessible to everyone. Furthermore, stringent anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies must be enforced across educational institutions, such as those established by India's NEP.

The lack of funding targeted towards transgender-inclusive education is another major gap in Pakistan's policy. India's Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) serves as an example that could be replicated to provide scholarship funding, teacher training, and infrastructure enhancement for transgender-inclusive schools. A similar fund in Pakistan will contribute toward a long-term

policy framework because it will only cater to schools actively working on promoting gender inclusion.

Finally, Pakistan must strengthen its implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that transgender-inclusive education policies are effectively enforced. India's NEP 2020 includes provisions for inter-departmental collaboration between the education ministry, social welfare departments, and human rights organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, which Pakistan can replicate. Support from non-governmental organizations and gender rights advocates will enhance the efforts of providing expertise and advocacy. Establishing independent monitoring bodies to oversee policy execution and assess progress can help bridge the gap between policy development and real-world implementation.

An example of a pilot program launched by the Punjab Government in Government Girls Comprehensive Higher Secondary School, Multan, supported by UNESCO, exemplifies that Pakistan has potential to make substantial progress in achieving inclusive education for its transgender community. This notable initiative can serve as a foundational model whose outcomes will help in shaping and improving future initiatives in this domain. This initiative aims to establish resolute schools that cater to students from grades 1 to 12. Life skill-based learning such as tailoring, dress designing, make-up/beauty parlor services, cooking and such other vocations have been shortlisted for the purpose. Books, stationery items, uniforms and shoes are being provided free of cost. Different/distinct uniforms have been designed for the transgender people. Similarly, uni-gender shoes have been selected as part of the uniform. A free pick and drop service has also been arranged for the students. Transgender faculty have been employed as educators in these classes to create earning opportunities for them and present them as role models for the students (School Education Department, 2021).

By analyzing its successes and shortcomings, we can propose educational access for transgender individuals in other regions of Punjab as well, which has Pakistan's most concentrated ratio of transgender community (7th Population & Housing Census, 2023). The success of this program in Multan will stand as a pioneering model which will demonstrate the potential for similar initiatives in other regions. The shortcomings will help other regions acknowledge the limitations and plan better initiatives for improved scalability. The purpose of including this body of knowledge is to show that initiatives like these can promote acceptance and inclusion, transform social attitudes, and eliminate barriers in accessibility to education. (Butt, Mehnaz, & Irfan, 2021).

Inclusive education can be a pragmatic option for transgender people as it contributes to their social inclusion and accommodation within the existing school infrastructure. By providing sensitizing programs, special pedagogical training for educators, setting up strict anti-bullying/harassment policies, providing uni-gender uniforms, and studying materials and monitoring the curriculum in institutes, Pakistan can create an inclusive environment for the transgender community (Khalid & Malik, 2024). Furthermore, equal contributions are needed, from both the government, in ensuring explicit policies and their implementation, and from society in normalizing third gender (Mir, 2019).

#### **4. RESEARCH QUESTION:**

What policy reforms do Pakistan need to ensure an inclusive education environment for transgender individuals?

##### **4.1. Sub Questions:**

1. What are the key gaps that hinder full inclusion of transgenders in the educational system?



2. How can educational institutes create an inclusive environment for transgender students?

## **5. METHODOLOGIES:**

This study adopts a qualitative approach through interviews and a mixed-method approach using both qualitative and quantitative surveys to comprehensively examine transgender-inclusive education. These methods were chosen to ensure both depth and breadth in the analysis. Qualitative method comprising interviews offer the chance to gather what could be put together as detailed, first-hand experiences from transgender individuals and education stakeholders, hence giving insight into the policy gaps, societal attitudes, and institutional challenges that may not be captured through numerical data alone.

Mixed method comprising surveys, combine both qualitative and quantitative elements that can be used for probing awareness levels through both statistical trends and broader patterns related to transgender-inclusive education. The quantitative data provides measurable insight, whereas the qualitative responses help unearth more elaborative information about personal experiences. This combination strengthens the research by bridging numerical evidence with lived realities, ensuring a well-rounded understanding of the issue and informing more effective policy recommendations.

### **5.1. Qualitative Method:**

Total nine interviews of semi-structure nature were conducted. The interviewees were either native to Lahore or currently residing in the city. Interviewees include a transgender, two transgender activists, a policy expert, two psychologists, three educationists, and one legal expert. The participants' information has been given in Table 5.1.

Interviewing transgender people is significant because it provides direct insight into their lived experiences and perspectives and ensures that any strategies or policies derived from the

research are grounded in the realities of this community. Transgender activists have firsthand experience in advocacy work, which can help highlight the barriers and influence policy reforms. Psychologists can provide policy recommendations that foster the emotional and developmental well-being of transgender students in an inclusive educational environment. Educationists' attitudes towards gender diverse students, and their views and recommendations on special pedagogical approaches needed are significant for the success of inclusive policies.

Transgender activists were contacted via email. Educationists were approached through academic institutions/networks. Psychologists, legal practitioners, and the policy expert were approached through personal referrals from trusted professional connections. Transgender participant was approached through personal referral.

Sr.	Name	Role	Qualifications
1.	Adv. Maimana	Legal Practitioner	Advocate of high court. Working on the law and policy consulting in the Ministry of Education. Expertise on the government initiatives being taken for the welfare of the transgender.
2.	Dr. Saima Salman	Psychologist	MPhil in psychology from National Institute of Psychology, Quaid e Azam University. Integrated counselor and a psychotherapist. A member of Pakistan Psychological Association, international affiliate or American Psychological Association, and PSCP.
3.	Dr. Saima Rizwan	Educationist	Professor of physiology at Rahbar dental college.
4.	Ghazala	Transgender	-
5.	Hamna Shafique	Psychologist	Psychology graduate with experience working as a training psychologist in various hospitals.
6.	Reem Sharif	Transgender Activist	First transgender police officer of Pakistan in 2020. Deputy Director in the Ministry of Human Rights, leading the Transgender Protection Centre under its administration.

**Table 5.1.****5.2. Mixed Method:**

Total one hundred surveys of both qualitative as well as quantitative nature were conducted with students of secondary, higher secondary and tertiary education. The questionnaire targeted student body from a range of public and private educational institutes, including secondary schools, colleges, and universities across Lahore district. The educational institutes included Crescent Model Higher Secondary School, Kinnaird College for Women University, FAST-NUCES, Lahore Grammar School, The Government College, Lahore College for Women University, Unique Group of Institutions, and SCIL, among others. This technique offers a more comprehensive understanding by merging personal narratives with statistical data. It can help gather broader viewpoints, as these students have firsthand experience of educational settings along with better understanding of the research subject. The surveys were conducted online as it is a more convenient and accessible method which allows respondents to give their opinions from any location, and at their own pace. The tool used to create surveys and get statistical analysis was Google Forms.

**5.3. Ethical Considerations:**

This research adheres to ethical guidelines by protecting participants' privacy, securing informed consent, and maintaining transparency throughout the process. Ethical considerations are essential for safeguarding participants' rights, building trust, and preserving the integrity of

the study. Adhering to these principles enhances the credibility and reliability of the research. Interview participants were fully aware of the research objectives and voluntarily agreed to reveal their identities and share their responses. The participants of the survey have chosen to remain anonymous but have provided full consent for their responses to be used in this study.

## **6. ANALYSIS:**

### **6.1. Qualitative Analysis:**

The responses from the interviews were analyzed and categorized into major and minor themes. The themes reflect the core areas of focus that emerged from the respondents' perspectives regarding transgenders' inclusive education. Categorizing the data into major and minor themes helps in grasping the most prominent issues while still acknowledging the aspects that are important but less frequently discussed. The major themes provide clear guidance on where the intervention is most needed and minor themes refine those areas to be more specific (Peel, 2020).

#### **6.1.1. Major Themes:**

The Table 6.1.1. represents major themes collected from the interviews with related categories to indicate each theme's contribution in the research area, in a structured way.

<b>Sr.</b>	<b>Major Themes</b>	<b>Theme Category</b>
1.	Challenges in Accessing Education	Education Barriers
2.	Social Stigma and Cultural Resistance	Social Barriers
3.	Lack of Inclusive Policies	Policy Gaps
4.	Barriers to Inclusivity	Inclusivity Barriers
5.	Mental Health Challenges in Exclusive Settings	Mental Health
6.	Importance of Sensitization	Awareness Building
7.	Policy Recommendations	Policy Advocacy

**Table 6.1.1**

#### **6.1.1.1. Respondents Perspectives Categorized by Themes:**

This section provides a comprehensive understanding of major themes collected from interviewees' responses.

- **Challenges in Accessing Education:**

The transgender interviewees shared their subjective experiences of facing discrimination, bullying and harassment in educational institutes, which hindered their ability to access education. For example, Ghazala said:

*“ Child, we did not get education. We did not study. We went to Madrassahs, we went to schools, we talked to everyone, but what we did not get from anywhere, the good- I mean, call it the environment, or the society, it is people's own nature or talk. People don't like us, no matter how much we make ourselves pious, no matter how much we create respect for ourselves, people don't see us with respect, they see us with bad eyes.”*

The transgender activist, Reem Sharif said:

*“I studied engineering at a private university in Lahore. Being transgender, I faced issues such as harassment, bullying, and discrimination. Religious biases were also prevalent. I experienced severe incidents, including rape. This led me to drop out, not because the university expelled me, but because the environment became unbearable. After two years, I couldn't complete my four-year degree.”*

- **Social Stigma and Cultural Resistance:**

The transgender individuals are often judged and marginalized under the pretense of negative societal perceptions and cultural norms. As Reem said:

*“We had an incident in Lahore where a talk was arranged in an elite class, and an activist was invited. The parents of the students attending the session walked out, stating that they*

*didn't want their children to hear from a transgender woman. I have a personal experience in this regard. I was invited to deliver a lecture at \*\*\*, but my lecture was canceled."*

In Pakistan, stigmatized mindsets oppose transgender inclusivity. For example, during interview Usama Ejaz stated that:

*"So, there is a controversial fear that if they studied under one roof it might affect the other kids."*

By "other kids" he addressed the cis gender students.

- **Lack of Inclusive Policies:**

Although legal frameworks exist, yet there is a noticeable absence of policies that are explicitly tailored to the unique needs of transgenders. In Reem's words:

*"There is no policy, my dear. There is no transgender-specific education policy. In Balochistan, there is a draft of a policy, and it is in the process of getting approval. However, it has not been approved yet. Where is the policy, and where will the reform happen? If it doesn't exist, how will there be reform?"*

In Usama Ejaz's opinion:

*"If there are rights given in article 25A our policies are not incorporating with it."*

*"Sometimes we are having very limited policies that align with the niche of transgenders..."*

The establishment of transgender schools is a recent initiative driven by necessity rather than policy mandates. Syed Jaffar Mehdi states:

*"I don't think so there are certain policies in Punjab which, uh, requires to launch the transgender schools. Then, this activity is, uh, during the last three to four years, the government itself- the sector itself thinks that it is necessary for transgender to operate schools so we launched three schools in South Punjab."*

- **Barriers to Inclusivity:**

When talking about significant barriers to inclusivity of transgenders in educational curricula, Reem expressed:

*“There are no opportunities, no admissions, and no options for us to apply anywhere. For example, online application forms don’t have a third gender category where a transgender person can apply. Institutions haven’t made policies to address harassment or create a safe environment for us. Even if a ‘third line’ is introduced for transgender individuals, where will we stand? If we stand in the men’s line, people will harass us. If we stand in the women’s line, people will object and tell us not to stand there.”*

- **Mental Health Challenges in Exclusive Settings:**

Transgenders are often exposed to mental health challenges in exclusive settings. For example, Psychotherapist Saima Salman said:

*“It’s, um, not feeling a sense of belonging, feeling of isolation, feeling of loneliness, feeling of, um, an identity crisis, feeling worthless and... one of the things that I witness also is that such people then, can become- have- have severe depression, um, severe anxiety and even suicidal tendencies.”*

Reem Sharif shared her experience, saying:

*“I suffered from extreme anxiety and depression, which paralyzed me physically for almost a year.”*

Psychologist Hamna Shafique stated:

*“Societal stigma can also affect their self-worth and mental health. I have seen firsthand how the lack of support in schools can enhance these challenges, which makes it difficult for them to cope with.”*

- **Importance of Sensitization:**

Sensitization refers to raising awareness and promoting understanding about the challenges and rights of transgender community. All interviewees emphasized the importance of sensitization at an early stage in order to promote inclusivity. For example, Sobo Malik said:

*“There's a need to understand first, they should have the basic knowledge about the transgender community and this can be done, uh, at a very initial step by adding the information about the transgender like the third gender in the curriculum first.”*

Reem emphasized the role of parents in sensitization:

*“Parents need to accept transgender individuals when they come into their lives. There is no need to measure them by religious standards or by expressions of behavior... If parents do not support, you cannot ensure inclusivity. They will withdraw their children, saying, we do not want to send our children to a place where transgender people are studying. If the parents withdraw their children, the school will automatically say that our main stakeholder is being disturbed, so they will remove the transgender child...”*

The incident revealed by Ghazala is a significant example of transgenders’ everyday struggles which highlights the need for sensitization:

*“But child, we do not get respect from anywhere. Someone, a watchman, or a gardener, and other kinds of people, they make fun of us, someone is pulling our dupatta, someone throws tomatoes, someone throws eggs, someone does rude things, that's why, child, we step aside to save our dignity.”*

As Sobo said:

*“If you haven't sensitized your security guard or the ones sitting at the reception or admission desk, because firstly when someone enters in the school, he or she has to, like, communicate*



*with these people first. If they are not sensitized at that time, so there's no reason to sensitize the teachers or the students."*

She also recommended:

*"As in community we can have, um, sensitization programs, we can have consultations, workshops, ted talks, we can publish success stories. We can show- just to build confidence in the community and also sensitize the society that we are as normal as other human beings living in Pakistan."*

- **Policy Recommendation:**

Policy recommendation outlines actionable suggestions provided by the interviewees to help bridge the policy and its implementation gaps. When asked about recommendation to effectively reform and implement inclusive education policies for transgenders, Transgender activist, Sobo Malik suggested that in order to overcome the policy gaps:

*"We have to be the part of this whole process because the community works best for the community, we can say. We can, like, be the best advocates of our community. We know the issues, we know the challenges, we can go deep down to the grassroot level, we have that access so, yeah. So, you have to involve the community in the whole process."*

Reem Sharif emphasized the importance of explicitly addressing transgenders:

*"Yes, the existing education policies should be reformed. Wherever it is written that this facility is for a specific gender category or will benefit a certain group of people, the word 'transgender' should be added everywhere. This will make things move in a better direction."*

Dr. Saima Rizwan suggested:

*"I think that the policy should include the training of the teachers... incentives be given to those teachers who have to show a model of including some transgender kid in their class and*

*some observer can see what efforts they have made and incentive would definitely make them understand and learn and apply whatever is being taught.”*

In Usama Ijaz’s opinion:

*“The most important thing is, it should be mandatory, anti-discrimination guidelines should be written, rules should be made for the institution that there must not be any discrimination of genders.”*

Dr. Saima Salman emphasizes the importance of quota system under strict rules and regulations in curriculum to promote inclusivity:

*“Giving equal opportunities to all the students, meaning that they should have some sort of criteria that make sure that the diversity is, uh, present, that we have at least one transgender in our, uh, so and so club... But at the same time, there should be also, um, very strict about when they catch something that is not promoting inclusivity and is hostile towards these people. So, having some repercussions, having some sort of, uh, um, a strict rule that you would either be expelled or we would, uh, you would have to pay a heavy fine if you're caught bullying or promoting hate, so, you know, those kinds of rules to begin with can be really, um, important and useful.”*

She also recommended:

*“But I feel psycho education is very important within the administration who are imposing the laws as well.”*

Sobo Malik recommended the importance of monitoring to ensure accountability in resource allocation and spendings. This can make the implementation process more effective:

*“This should come with a legal documentation, you should have a registered organization, then you can have a project on it to which you're accountable to someone. You can be accountable for the spendings you made, so that is very important.”*

Syed Jaffar Mehdi suggested the monitoring methods being used to lead the nine transgender schools in Punjab under his management, which can serve as a model for effective implementation:

*“We are monitoring the transgender schools in a number of phases. First of all, we are taking the MOVs, Means of Verification, from the schools, from the head teacher of that schools regarding the strength of the transgenders, regarding the financial aid which we are giving it to them, they are providing us the evidence that these financial aids are supposed- are being given to the transgenders timely. Secondly, we are directly connected with the CEOs, Chief Executive Officers of each district, they are inspecting the schools, they are also reporting to us. Thirdly, we are directly contacted with the focal person. There is one focal person in each district who is responsible to answer us or who is responsible to report us on the activities of the transgender's schools.”*

### **6.1.2. Minor Themes:**

The Table 6.1.2. represents minor themes collected from the interviews with related categories to indicate each theme's contribution in the research area, in a structured way.

Sr.	Minor Themes	Theme Category
1.	Challenges with Gurus	Challenges
2.	Transgender Role Models in Curriculum	Representation
3.	Understanding Gender Diversity in Curriculum	Curricular Adoptions

**Table 6.1.2.**

#### **6.1.2.1. Respondents Perspectives Categorized by Themes:**

This section provides a comprehensive understanding of minor themes collected from interviewees' responses.

- **Challenges with Gurus (Transgender Community Leaders):**

This theme highlights the hindrance in the education of transgenders sometimes, due to resistance from Gurus. As highlighted by Syed Jaffar Mehdi:

*“The transgender community- they always live in some groups, in some areas, so the head of the group is called Guru. The Gurus are sometimes not well with us, they are just making problems for us in restrictions for transgenders students in schools... until CEO of these districts or focal persons introduce some incentives for them.”*

- **Transgender Role Models in Curricula:**

Positive portrayals and success stories of transgender individuals in the curriculum is an effective way to shift societal attitudes. As Reem Sharif pointed out:

*“It’s also crucial to mention transgender heroes in the curriculum. You have created female heroes in your books, male characters as well, but not transgender characters to teach children. These characters can easily be created. If I were sitting here, I am an 18th-grade government employee, and there are transgender doctors in Pakistan, transgender lawyers, social scientists, anthropologists, etc. So, I believe that inclusivity in the curriculum should include these aspects.”*

- **Understanding Gender Diversity in Curriculum:**

Reem pointed out the building factors that should be incorporated in curriculum:

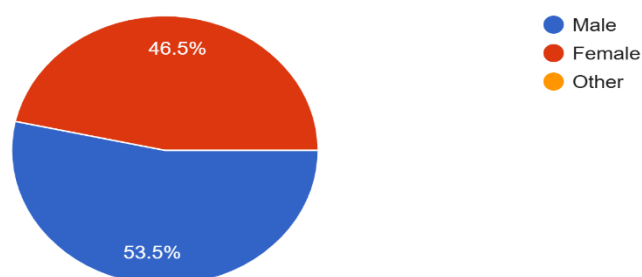
*“For us, inclusive education doesn’t just mean bringing children into schools and making them sit there. It’s about what you are teaching them. Where in the education you provide, is it mentioned that there is a difference between gender and sex? It’s never taught anywhere.”*

*Where is the difference between gender and sex? It's never taught anywhere. Where is the difference between a cisgender woman and a transgender woman? It's never taught anywhere. Where is it, you know, where the chapter on gender diversity is properly included? It doesn't exist. So, inclusive education for me means that the education being taught should first be inclusive. Its meaning for me is that the curriculum itself should be inclusive. Then, those who teach it should be inclusive. After that, those who learn it will naturally become inclusive."*

## 6.2. Statistical Analysis:

The statistical analysis of the survey conducted with students of secondary, higher secondary and tertiary education, provides the perspectives of the student body on the area of research. The majority age range of students was from 15 to 22 years. The analysis revealed the gender of participants which is comprised of 53.5% males and 46.5% females, as shown in Table 6.2.1.

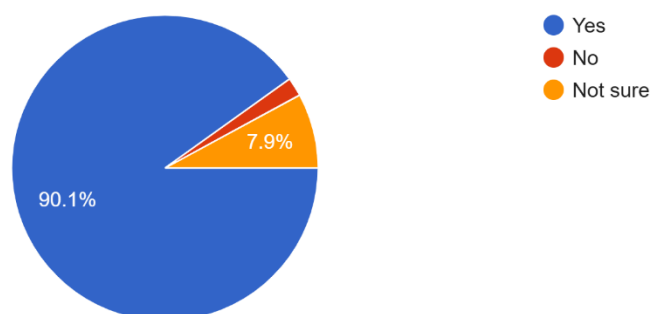
Gender  
101 responses



**Table 6.2.1.**

Do you know who transgender people are?

101 responses

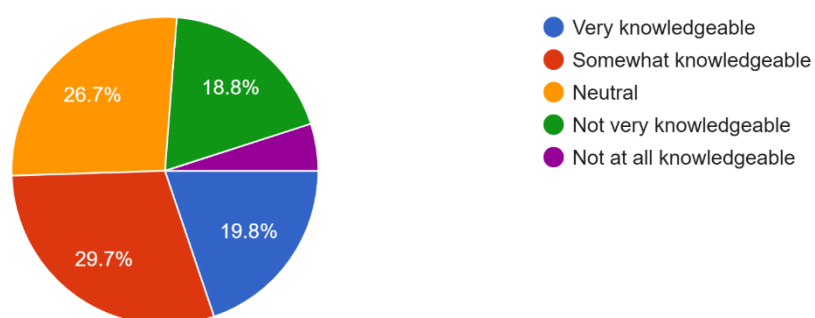


**Table 6.2.2.**

Table 6.2.2. shows a large ratio of participants that recognize the transgenders from their term, but, from Table 6.2.3. it is visible that there is a notable fluctuation in the level of knowledge the participants have, about the transgender people. This highlights the varying degrees of societal awareness, reflecting heterogeneity in education and exposure to transgender-related topics.

How would you rate your knowledge of the transgender community?

101 responses



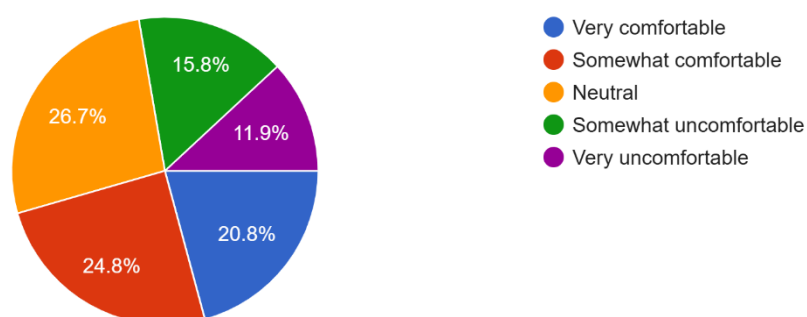
**Table 6.2.3.**

The analysis of the survey revealed a significant diversity in the responses of participants' level of comfort in discussing transgender people in their community. Some felt comfortable, a

considerable proportion chose a neutral stance, while some respondents expressed varying levels of discomfort. It shows that each participant's response is influenced by a range of factors, including the socio-cultural norms, nature of awareness about transgender community, personal beliefs, societal acceptance, and social stigma. The male participants expressed varying levels of discomfort when discussing transgenders, more than females. Table 6.2.4.

How comfortable are you discussing transgender people in your community?

101 responses



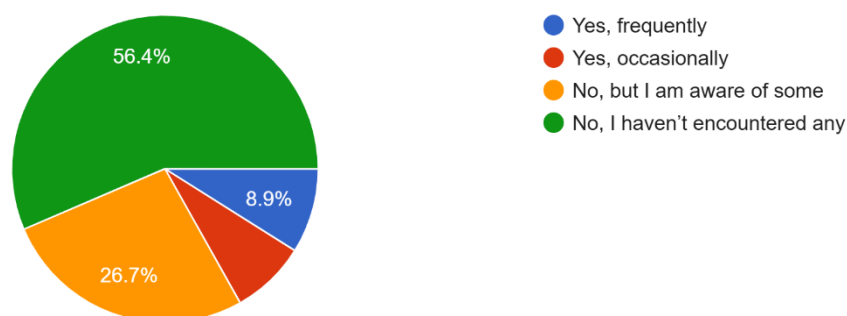
**Table 6.2.4.**

The survey results show that some students have not personally encountered any transgender in their educational gathering but are aware of some. While others expressed varying degrees of their encounters with the transgenders in their educational setting. This indicates a growing recognition and acceptance of third gender among youth, a fruit of advocacy aimed at promoting awareness, and understanding about transgender community. However, a large proportion of respondents expressed not encountering any transgenders in their educational gatherings. This reflects the gaps in our educational systems to establish a gender inclusive environment where transgenders feel safe and supported enough to get education without any fear of judgement,

bullying, discrimination, and harassment. It also highlights how stereotypes and societal stigma can discourage transgenders from receiving education. Table 6.2.5.

Have you encountered any transgender people in your educational institute/community?

101 responses



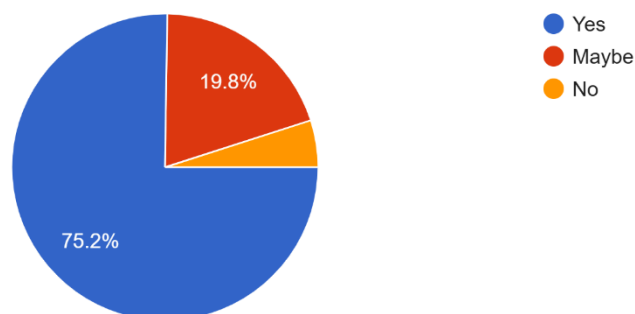
**Table 6.2.5**

A larger proportion of respondents supported the idea that transgender education should be normalized in society, which reflects a broader shift towards inclusivity and acceptance among youth. Yet, some respondents were either uncertain or completely against this notion. Table 6.2.6. Similarly, a major proportion of respondents believe that transgenders should study in the same schools as cisgenders, while a minor proportion was either unsure or against it, reflecting lingering societal biases. Table 6.2.7.



Do you think transgender education should be normalized in society?

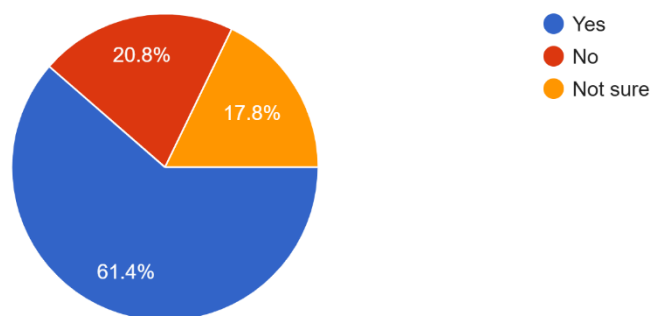
101 responses



**Table 6.1.6.**

Do you think transgender people should study in the same schools as cisgender (non-transgender) students?

101 responses



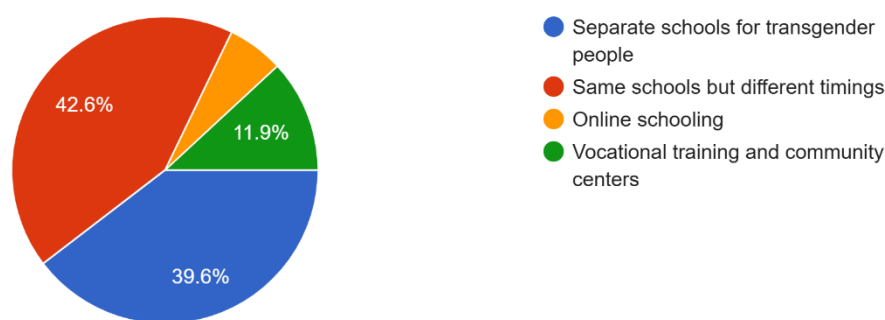
**Table 6.2.7.**

Table 6.2.8. shows the opinions given by respondents about other alternatives to accommodate transgenders in educational curricula. 42.6% of the respondents supported the idea that transgenders should be accommodated in the same schools as cis genders but at different timings. While 39.6% said that there should be different schools, reflecting exclusivity. The idea of online

schooling, and vocational training and community centers was also supported by minor proportion.

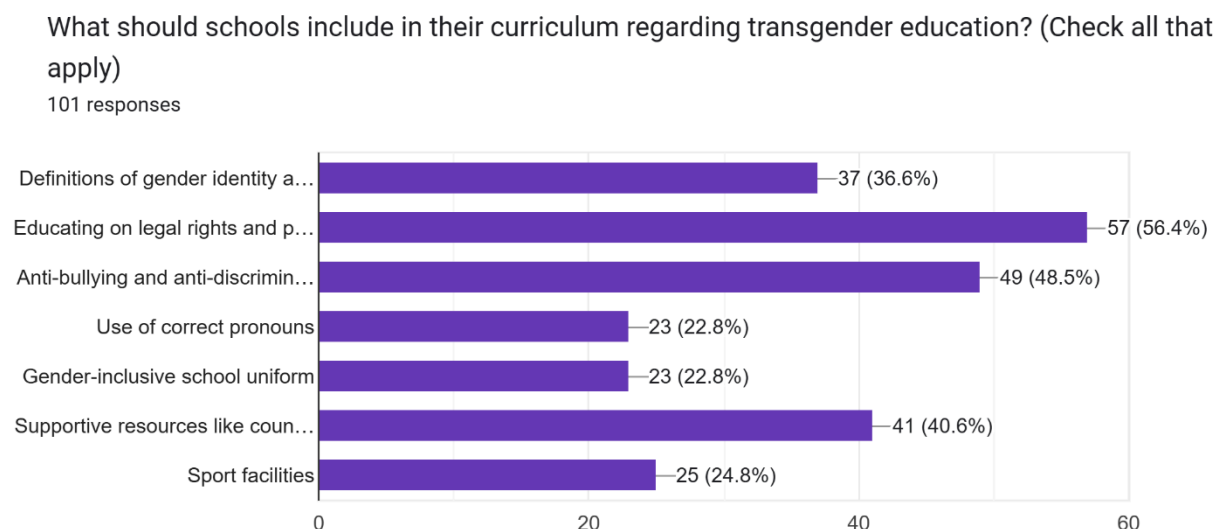
In your opinion, what are the other alternatives to accommodate transgender people in educational institutes?

101 responses



**Table 6.2.8.**

The largest proportion of respondents expressed that schools should incorporate education on legal rights and protections in their curricula, while the second largest group emphasized adoption of anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies. The third group showed inclination towards inclusion of counseling and peer support groups. Besides the three large groups, a minor proportion of respondents advocated for inclusion of definitions of gender identity and expression in the education system, sport facilities, use of correct pronouns, and gender inclusive school uniforms. Incorporating major and minor areas in curriculum strikes a balance between foundational knowledge and inclusive practices, making it adaptable to gender diverse needs while fostering an equitable environment. Table 6.2.9.



**Table 6.2.9.**

## 7. CONCLUSION:

This research underscores the significant barriers faced by transgender individuals when it comes to the access to inclusive quality education. It highlights the urgent need for inclusive policies and practices within educational systems. The analysis of the responses from interviewees highlights the major challenges transgender students encounter, including social stigma, bullying, harassment, mental health challenges, and insufficient representation in the curricula. These barriers are not only rooted in societal and cultural attitudes but also in the structural limitations of educational institutions.

Moreover, the recommendations provided by the respondents emphasize the importance of financial support, teacher training, counseling, and sensitization to facilitate better integration and acceptance of transgender students. The necessity of gender-inclusive curricula and the

inclusion of transgender role models were highlighted as essential building steps towards fostering an inclusive environment.

While significant strides have been made in certain areas, there remains a gap in policy reforms and implementation. The research calls for a stronger commitment from both governmental and educational institutions to ensure that transgender students are provided with the same opportunities and rights as their cisgender peers. It is evident that in order to normalize education for transgender individuals, systemic changes are required across both the societal and institutional levels.

This study provides a foundation for future research on transgender-inclusive education policies and suggests that stakeholders must work collaboratively to create an environment where transgender students are respected and supported to succeed academically.

#### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- To raise public knowledge of the rights and dignity of transgender people, nationwide awareness programs had to be started. Community centers, colleges, and schools could be important locations for these kinds of programs.
- Regular training on gender diversity and transgender problems should be provided to educators and school personnel.
- Education on transgender rights, gender diversity, and transgenders' success stories should be included in the curriculum, at an early stage. This can aid in eliminating misconceptions and establishing transgender individuals as mainstream.

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