

Psychosocial Explorations of Gender in Society

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Edited by

Anila Kamal, Sobia Masood
Rubina Hanif, Humaira Jami,
and Aisha Zubair

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PREFACE

Gender is the niche area embedded in all settings and situations, which has attracted attention across the globe. With such diverse and relatively large spectrum, gender is the core element reflected in varying challenges and issues that men and women face in their respective roles. The issues of gender are so entwined in the norms of society and daily practices that diverse opinions and exchange of innovative ideas can change the narratives around psychology of gender. Keeping in view the focal role of gender, National Institute of Psychology, Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University (Pakistan) held International Conference on Psychology of Gender in Perspective: Issues and Challenges (1-2 December, 2016). Major premises of the conference predominantly centered on the three pronged dimensions.

Firstly, gender, has an impeccable role in achieving the delicate balance in our lifestyle, family, workplace, social settings, and future endeavors. Therefore, there is a dire need to focus on research based knowledge and experiences to highlight the gender related issues and challenges in various settings including education; social change and roles; relationships and marriage; health and well being; sexuality and reproductive health; trauma, violence, and vulnerability; human rights and justice; work; decision making, leadership, and activism; culture and media; religion, race, and ethnicity.

Secondly, an equally important aspect is the gender gap which is reducing or widening apart and being gendered, do we have the power to maneuver obstacles together and become productive members of the society. These are few aspects that capture researchers' attention and chapters presented in this book knitted around themes related to gender issues confronted in understanding the psychology of gender.

Thirdly, to reflect upon the dynamic approaches characterizing psychology of the gender in a culture of oppression and patriarchy with the intent to promote physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development in community across gender. This proceeds book provides a chance to debate the opportunities and the impediments that keep gender equality at bay.

Various chapters would offer diverse views and experiences and discuss current challenges and future prospects for theory and research.

—Editors

CHAPTER ONE

GENDER ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This chapter highlights the issues and challenges related to gender that Pakistani society is currently facing. Globally, there is a trend to only report gender differences rather than gender similarities across life domains, and Pakistan also conforms to this rule. This trend maintains the gender gap and hinders the true understanding of any phenomenon. Sexism, gender stereotypes, and gender discrimination are outcomes of this gender gap. Therefore, our aim is to identify the major challenges that men, women, and transgender individuals face in Pakistan, the factors underlying these challenges, and to provide recommendations for possible solutions to make gender our strength.

Keywords: *Gender roles, gender issues, Pakistan*

Gender in Pakistan

Pakistan is located in the South and West Asia region, bordering India, Iran, Afghanistan, and the Arabian Sea. The estimated population of Pakistan for 2010 was over 173 million. About two-thirds or 64% of Pakistanis live in rural areas, with men outnumbering women (UNESCO, 2010a). The 2017 Census revealed the total population to be around 200 million, with men still outnumbering women.

In the past decade, Pakistan has made significant strides in addressing gender related issues that have received much international attention. The introduction of women to the military, transgender individuals' right to national identity, the implementation of the sexual harassment bill and the domestic violence act, and the empowerment of women through various development projects are a few of the most prominent actions that have been the talk of the town for quite some time. Such affirmative actions reflect a growing understanding of the plight of women and gender minorities in Pakistan. These are much appreciated policies at the government level and women have really stepped out as active members of the society to play their role in society. According to the National Institute of Population Studies (2008), around 30% of women in Pakistan are in employment. Nevertheless, at the grassroot level, the contemporary socio-political and economic conditions in Pakistan are still limited due to widely held cultural stereotypes/norms, patriarchy, and religious misinterpretations. Women and transgender people are not the only ones who suffer, as this also affects men. The people of Pakistan have been confronted with great challenges over a long period of time, such as security concerns because of terrorism, a lack of employment, the unstable political situation, over-population, inflation, and poverty. In the prevailing situation, it is very hard for men to maintain their social performance based on their agency, as well as their hunter and bread earner roles (Helgeson, 2012). Nevertheless, challenges faced across the gender divide are often not perceived as an issue. Generally, people do not consider gender as being worthy of discussion.

Pakistan has joined the top five most improved countries in the world in terms of survival index and health according to the Global Gender Gap report (Morin, Fitima, and Qadir, 2018). However, it is also at the bottom end in terms of gender equality in the workplace. According to the Human Development Report (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2015), the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) rank for Pakistan is 100 out of 185 countries. This rank determines the empowerment of women on a countrywide basis. This measure shows the unequal status of women in terms of economic resources, as well as their participation in political and economic decision-making. Physical security and autonomy are major issues behind this gender disparity (Hyder, 2018). In spite of the fact that the Islamic religion preaches equal rights for men and women, as well as the fact that emancipation and empowerment have always been present in legal documents, this has not yet reached its full extent in reality. The gender gap and gender discrimination exist in all sectors (education, work, health, mental health, access to assets and resources, exercising autonomy,

decision making, etc.). In this chapter, the gender-specific challenges (male, female, and transgender individuals) will be discussed in terms of human rights. It will also discuss the risk factors underlying these issues and the related recommendations.

Education

Education is a fundamental human right as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Pakistan has committed to equality in education at the national level and is also a signatory of international declarations and agreements in this regard. Recently, Constitutional Amendment No. 18 declared free and compulsory education for children aged 5 to 16 years a fundamental right under Article 25-A of the Constitution. Laws exist, but there is significant lack of enforcement. Despite the law, education is still not free, and poverty is one of the major reasons that restricts access to quality education (see UNESCO, 2010a). The National Education Policy of Pakistan, which was approved in September 2009, recognizes the persistent disparities in education across gender and rural-urban locations (Ministry of Education, 2009). Pakistan has the lowest net enrollment rates in the South and West Asian Region because of its lower expenditure on education. The net enrollment rate of boys in schools is higher than girls in all the four provinces of Pakistan. Similarly, the female literacy rate is persistently lower than that of boys across these provinces. In some areas of the country, “education is still a dream for boys and unimaginable for girls” (UNESCO, 2010a). According to the Pakistan Ministry of Education (2009), there are 10% more primary schools for boys than there are for girls. Gender difference also exists in teaching staff. Co-educational schools are less common in rural areas than urban ones, indicating a lack of willingness to educate girls and boys together in these regions. In most regions of Pakistan, girls are often not permitted to attend school unless they have a female teacher. It is, therefore, very important that there is gender parity in the teaching staff (UNESCO, 2010a).

As reported in the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS) 2001–2002, the most significant reasons for girls never attending school were as follows: “parents didn’t allow it”, “too expensive” (in urban areas), and “too far” (in rural areas). This shows that more than one third of girls never attended school for socio-cultural reasons. The cost of education clearly indicates that poverty is a constraint for both genders. Interestingly, for boys, another reason was that they were “not willing” to go to school

(Mujahid-Mukhtar, as cited in Mumtaz, n.d.). Poverty affects girls the most, as families do not invest in their education and prefer them to do household chores. This leads to a vicious circle as women cannot earn any income due to a lack of education and so the household's earnings remain low and, therefore, continues to be unable to afford to educate their female children. Food incentives offered by World Food Programme in some underdeveloped districts and stipends paid by the government have led to a considerable improvement in the enrolment and retention of girls in schools. At the same time, girls are considered economically less valuable and so spending on their education is considered to be a monetary loss, as they are expected to get married and live with their husband's family (UNESCO, 2010a).

Male members of the family are encouraged to acquire higher education to compete around the world, while female ones are trained to take up domestic tasks to become good mothers and wives (Khan, 2007; Maqsood, Maqsood, and Raza, 2012). Financial constraints affect female education more than their male counterparts (Khalid and Mukhtar, 2002). Travelling is another barrier, as educational institutes are often in distal regions. This threatens personal security and generates a fear of harassment, which deters women from seeking education (Sathar, Lloyd, and Haque, 2000; World Bank, 2007). The ongoing security concerns in Pakistan have also affected girls' access to education, as parents are less willing for their daughters to attend school (UNESCO, 2010). According to UNESCO (2010b), with each 500-meter increase in distance from the closest girls' school enrolment drops off sharply, which accounts for 60% of the gender gap in enrolments due to this "distance penalty".

Cultural norms in many parts of Pakistan require girls and women to stay within the house; for example, somebody must accompany them when they leave the house (Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2001). Such measures are taken to protect women/girls from any harm, as actual or perceived harm may bring dishonor upon her and her family. Later, this becomes a hindrance when finding a suitable husband. Such mindsets are major obstacles in girls' education and school attendance (UNESCO, 2010a). Another problem is the early marriage of daughters and the need for a dowry. This also puts emphasis on the male education as a means to generate income; therefore, money is invested in boys' education (Maqsood et al., 2012). Division of labor based on gender roles increases the preference for sons and the investment in their education, as they are perceived to be potential bread-winners for the family (UNESCO, 2010). This also creates pressure for men to be high achievers to financially

support their family. Male unemployment is not appreciated in society. This inter-role conflict and the requirement to become independent as soon as possible lead to mental stress for men (Helgeson, 2012).

To reduce gender disparity in education, UNESCO (2010a) has proposed that there is a need to spend more on education; to build new schools; to hire female teachers to demonstrate gender sensitivity in the region; to ensure free and compulsory primary education across the genders; for flexible school timings; to work for advocacy; to improve evaluation and monitoring systems; and to ensure equal job opportunities and wages. Recently progress has been made through the development of women-only universities and some female colleges have also been upgraded to university level in order to promote higher education among women. In the past year, the literacy rate has increased for women. Even in non-traditional educational fields, like STEM, we have observed more enrollments for girls, while the number of boys is gradually decreasing. The empowerment of one gender (female) or decline in the other (male) requires attention from researchers (Helgeson, 2012). At the same time, psychologists can also implement attitude change programs to break existing stereotypes/mindsets about women's education in Pakistan.

Recently, transgender lecturers teaching at university level have received much attention in Pakistan. People and students have very encouraging views about this. Educational institutes have also been established by the NGO sector to mainstream transgender individuals (Bilal, April 6, 2018). However, much still needs to be done in the public sector, as there is no exclusive quota for their education, separate bathrooms, or common room facilities, etc. As with the other two genders, they also have special needs because research shows that educational institutes are vulnerable settings where LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) individuals experience daily attacks, such as name-calling, sexual harassment, physical abuse, insults, humiliation, violence, and discrimination (Helgeson, 2012). They are marginalized because of widely held beliefs about gender dichotomy and heteronormativity. Transgender individuals are perceived as violating the patriarchy's codes; considered to be sinners for violating the binary concept of gender as propagated by religion; and are unfairly accused of spreading HIV/AIDS (Jami and Kamal, 2015) and homosexuality (Helgeson, 2012). Therefore, there is a dire need to address misconceptions about transgender individuals, clearly define their legal status, provide them with special physical and mental health services that meet their needs, and ensure their basic human rights by improving public awareness.

Work

In Pakistani society, distinct roles for men and women prevail: that is, the woman is the “homemaker” and the man is the “bread winner”. Although many women work beyond the domestic sphere, they are still expected to fulfill their domestic role. They are socialized to attain this role, which means a working woman feels guilt and shame for not giving enough time to her family. This means women may be exploited because of conflicts between work and family, and sometimes women do not even have control or freedom over their own money. Globally, women are poorer and suffer from more financial hardship. It is generally believed in Pakistan that women are intellectually less sound than men and lack decision-making skills (Hadi, 2018). These stereotypes prevent women from entering the workforce. Children are told time and time again that mathematics is not meant for girls and household chores are not meant for boys. Therefore, based on this concept, parents only expose children to activities based on their gender (Helgeson, 2012). Therefore, priority is still given to men in politics, armed forces, and science, engineering technology, and mathematics (STEM) fields, while women are discouraged from these areas or they are not hired for such jobs. Islam supports equal rights for men and women with regard to property, business, and education. Islamic teachings state that women are the soul owners of their earnings and property, and others are not able to use them without their permission. However, these messages are not promoted in society for the fear that women will insist on their rights. Culturally, women are told that they are supposed to remain within the boundaries of their home; only brothers (or male members of the family) have the right to inheritance and property; and their work (if they are doing any) is only to support male members of the family to meet financial constraints, but not for their own self-actualization (Helgeson, 2012).

Two fundamental perceptions establish the gender relations in Pakistan: women are inferior to men and a man's honor is determined by the actions of the women in his family (Akhtar and Metrux, 2015). Therefore, their mobility is limited and many restrictions are imposed on their behavior and activities. They also have limited contact with the opposite gender. Many women are forced to wear the "Purdah" (veil) for protection and to ensure their respectability (Ali, Krantz, Gul, and Asad, 2014). This veil physically and symbolically creates different spheres for men and women by separating their activities (Fayyaz and Kamal, 2015; Helgeson, 2012). Fewer women in bigger cities, such as Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore, practice it than those in Khyber Pukhtoonkhwah, and Balochistan, where

women are generally not allowed to leave their home without any significant reason or cannot meet men who are not relatives (Khan, 2013; Munshey, 2015; UNDP, 2015). Nevertheless, in rural areas (mostly in Punjab and Sindh) women still work alongside men in farms (Yusuf, 2014).

It is worth mentioning that South Asia is one of the few areas to have a woman as the head of state (Shaheed, 2016). In Pakistan, a female prime minister has been elected twice, who was also the first female prime minister in the Islamic world; they also had the first female Speaker of the National Assembly in the world; and a woman has now been elected as chief justice. Despite this, women make up only 3% of all executive positions (Morin et al., 2018). Three “Ms” have been identified as barriers for gender disparity in leadership of Pakistan. These include masculinization, matriarchy, and mental block (Faiz, Bano, and Asif, 2017). According to Mumtaz (n.d.), the barriers to gender equality in the workplace are the societal perception of women being dependent; less recognition of their contribution as productive members of society; a lack of information about available opportunities, assets, and services; a lack of control over resources; restricted social mobility; and non-marketable skills. Further, violence and the fear of violence are also barriers for working women.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which was launched in January 2002, aimed to meaningfully reduce poverty in the country by addressing various gender dimensions that included interventions such as gender sensitive budgeting; leadership training for women; micro-credit financing; and a 5% quota for women in government jobs. Many have been translated into several specific programs for empowering women (Mumtaz, n.d.). Nowadays, wives earn as much as 12% more than their husbands in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2014); this indicates the changing power dynamics within the country. Traditional gender roles have been reversed to allow for the rights and emancipation of women (Ali et al., 2014).

Men’s work status is better than women’s, yet they are constrained by strongly held evolutionary and patriarchal views that they are breadwinners or hunters (Helgeson, 2012). They are expected to leave no stone unturned to financially support their family. During this era of poverty and financial and political instability, this is indeed a huge task. Gradually, people have started believing that all members should contribute the family’s finances regardless of gender; however, a woman working outside the home brings an element of shame and guilt for the male members of her family. Men are expected to be the sole breadwinners and to provide for their families

without help. This creates conflict for men and stress (Helgeson, 2012). It also has a huge social impact. Men have started delaying marriage because of the responsibilities associated with it. In Pakistan, men have not only to bear the responsibility of their immediate relatives, but also for their extended families. At times, a male member may be supporting his family, parents, and brother's family (in case the brother dies) and sister's family (if she is widow or divorced). The stress caused by menial resources leads to depression, substance use, and suicide.

Society insists that men adhere to a specific man code, which is heteronormative, masculine, physically powerful, and so on. This is high in collectivistic cultures, such as Pakistan, where men have to act in certain ways to keep the social fabric intact. This not only dictates their behavior but also leads to them managing others' behavior if they are violating the man code (Helgeson, 2012). The rigid societal rules and principles that govern men's needs should be made flexible, so that they can also enjoy their lives beyond the rigidly confined boundaries of masculinity. Men are forced to put their energy into proving their masculinity, as they do not want to be judged as emotionally and socially weak.

In 2012, transgender has been legally recognized as a third gender in Pakistan. NADRA and many other organizations have announced a special quota of jobs that have been allocated for transgender people. Nevertheless, because of a lack of clarity over which individuals are transgender and limited religious, medical, and legal coverage, it is difficult for them to find mainstream work. Hijras/khwajasaras (male to female transgender individuals living in the form of a community) are forced into sex work or performing dances at functions and fairs because they are unable to access other types of employment. This leads to physical and mental health problems.

Health

There is an unbalanced gender ratio (91 women for every 100 men) in Pakistan, when compared with industrialized countries (Nasrullah and Bhatti, 2012). This may be because male infants enjoy more family resources and better care in terms of nutrition and healthcare than female infants. Female children are more vulnerable to neglect and poor health compared to male counterparts (Qadir, Khan, Medhin, and Prince, 2011). Intra-household bias in food distribution leads to nutritional deficiencies among female children (Asian Development Bank, 2000). Women's

health cannot be considered in isolation without considering the role of their reproduction system. A high maternal mortality rate (350–450/100,000), as well as the female mortality ratio of 1 to 4 year olds (which is 66 % higher for girls than boys), is indicative of the social factors that affect women. In Pakistan, 12% of women's health issues are due to reproductive problems and 6% to nutritional deficiencies (Mumtaz, n.d.). Early marriage predisposes girls to early pregnancy and childbirth with an estimated 42% becoming pregnant before they turn 20 years old (Nasrullah and Muazzam, 2010). Early marriage and pregnancy lead to poor health outcomes, such as anemia, hypertension, and premature and low-birth weight infants (Mahavarkar, Madhu, and Mule, 2008). Increased incidences of osteoporosis in Pakistani women may also be the outcome of poor nutritional status and gender inequality (Fatima et al., 2009); the same is true for tuberculosis, which is 20–30% higher in Pakistani females than males (Codlin et al., 2011). Women are overly involved with others' welfare, as they are relationship oriented and have less self-compassion. This element of self-sacrifice is very high among mothers, to the extent that they neglect their own health while taking care of family members. This engenders severe negative consequences for their health (Helgeson, 2012). High costs of health services, immobility, restrictions on decision-making, and limited access to information are major impediments when women seek health care facilities (Sustainable Development Policy Institute [SDPI], 2008). Besides this, social and familial control over women's sexuality, their economic dependence on men, excessive childbearing, and high level of illiteracy adversely affect their health. Institutionalized gender bias in terms of the lack of female service providers in the health sector, and neglect of women's basic and reproductive health needs further aggravates their health status (Asian Development Bank, 2000). It has been shown that increasing secondary level education among girls could reduce the fertility rate by 1.4 children per women (from 5.3 to 3.9) after accounting for access to family planning and healthcare (United Nations (UN) Millennium Project, 2005). Therefore, a lack of education underpins all the miseries across the genders in Pakistan.

Pakistan has a large HIV prevalence because of its number of injecting drug users (IDUs). Large scale targeted interventions are urgently required to prevent the rapid increase in HIV. According to UN estimates, at the end of 2009, about 97,000 people were living with HIV in Pakistan; however, the official reports are lower due to under-reporting (The World Bank, 2012). Due to lack of power and ability to make their own decisions, women are unable to negotiate with their partners who have

HIV/AIDS. Additionally, women are vulnerable to abusive relationships and have less ability to cope once infected because of stigma and lack of social support (Hasnain, 2005). HIV/AIDS and hepatitis is high in male addicts in Pakistan because they often use infected needles to inject drugs (Nadeau, Truchon, and Biron, 2000). In Pakistan, men are more likely to have illicit or extra marital relationship than women. They can access male, female, and Hijra (transgender) sex workers for their sexual gratification. Sex workers have greater incidences of HIV/AIDS because of unprotected sex. Hijra sex workers (6%) are more likely to contract HIV/AIDS. The reasons are IUDs, a lack of power and control during sexual contact, unprotected sex, sexual abuse, sexual contact with sex workers, a lack of education and awareness, the culture of silence in a Muslim country, limited surveillance, voluntary counseling and testing systems, unsafe medical practices, infected blood transfusion, a lack of knowledge among health practitioners, and social and economic deprivation. Therefore, measures should be taken to eradicate these problems in order to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS (The World Bank, 2012). Unfortunately, the literature does not highlight men's emerging health issues in Pakistan. If men are discussed, this is always in context of women's health. Similarly, there is little to be found on the health of transgender individuals except with reference to vulnerable groups for HIV/AIDS. The public health care system is suffering because there is a tendency to serve well-to-do individuals (SDPI, 2008) rather than less affluent people.

Mental Health

Pakistan revised its mental health policy in 2003. A disaster/emergency plan for mental health was revised in 2006 due to Pakistan's bleak security conditions created by the risk of terrorism. In addition, national mental health policies and legislation also exist, but are not enforced. Only 0.4% of Pakistan's health care expenditure is devoted to mental health. This expenditure is much lower than other developing countries. Only, 5% of the population has free access to important psychotropic medicines. Inpatients are primarily made up of two diagnostic groups: (1) mood (affective) disorders (31%), and (2) neurotic, stress related, and somatoform disorders (24%). The proportion of female users (69%) is highest in inpatient units and lowest in outpatient facilities (World Health Organization, 2009). The high number of female users compared to male users reflects more incidences of mental health problems in the female population or at least it is more often reported in them. Mood disorders,

especially depression, has a high prevalence in women (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and the same is true in Pakistan (Naqvi, 2007). However, the suicide rate has significantly increased among men compared to women (Khan, Naqvi, Thaver, and Prince, 2008) and even more so in young and unmarried men, while this is reversed for women. Mostly, the reasons are domestic in nature (Khan and Reza, 2000). A family network is a protective factor for women against depression, while child care and a poor relationship with their spouse and extended family are risk factors (Naqvi, 2007). The growing security concerns, as well as social and economic deprivation, are making people vulnerable to mental health problems in Pakistan, most notably to substance abuse, mood disorders, and suicide. People generally prefer to go to traditional healers, as they believe that mental issues stem from black magic or a supernatural force (see the review in Khalily, 2011).

Transgender individuals experience high incidences of depression, anxiety, stress, substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies because of their minority status, the discrimination and violence that they face in society, lack of job opportunities, and risky risk behavior (Aurat Foundation, 2016). Gender dysphoria is prevalent among Pakistan's Hijra community (Jami, 2012). Nevertheless, there are no mental health services, assessment protocols, and interventions available in this context. It should be of prime importance for mental health professionals to address the specific mental health needs of transgender individuals. Comorbid mental health issues with gender dysphoria can be reduced if interventions to handle gender dysphoria are in practice. Education, employment, and health issues are the root causes for mental health problems across the genders. If these are prevented, mental health problems can be reduced.

Abuse

Abuse has different forms. Some are purely based in domestic settings, and some are associated with a minority status. Women are the victims of domestic violence, honor killings, dowry deaths, acid throwing, human trafficking, and so on (Hadi, 2018).

Zakar, Zakar, and Abbas (2015) reported that 65% of women in rural areas have suffered domestic violence. Domestic violence is harmful for women and permanently damages their integrity and wellbeing as the power is very much tilted in men's favor. In rural areas, violence against women is tolerated and rarely reported. Women also have less capacity to control it because they are less educated and economically disempowered. Marriage

at an early age and poor reproductive health make them more vulnerable. Adherence to patriarchal structures is significantly related to intimate partner violence (Murshid and Critelli, 2017). Quite often, intimate partner violence is not reported because it is believed to be a private family matter (Hadi, 2018). Women who married at a young age are more vulnerable to becoming victims of domestic violence from their husbands and their in-laws (Raj, 2010).

In general, men are perceived as powerful, strong, and superior beings, while women are constructed as inferior, weak, and powerless (Helgeson, 2012). In this patriarchal society, men justify violence by considering it their right to “correct women’s behavior”. At the same time, brides are reminded, directly or indirectly, by their family that their husband’s home is now their home until they embrace death. This implies that when they encounter suffering at their husband’s home, they should not complain or leave. The fact that a divorce leads to social stigma (Khan, 2013) instills fear in brides and makes them feel unprotected and vulnerable (Hadi, 2018).

Also, girls working as domestic workers are often denied medical treatment because they are domestic help and do not share the same status as the other children in the household (UNICEF, 2014). Girls are often perceived as an economic liability because of the tradition of paying a dowry at the time of marriage. When the dowry expectations of in-laws are not met, the bride is threatened with death, or tortured mentally and physically, in order to blackmail her family into meeting dowry demands (Nasrullah and Muazzam, 2010).

Women are socialized to accept intimate partner violence as the matrimonial right of husbands. Therefore, instead of seeking justice, they often remain silent, as they are concerned about the safety and future of their children; perceive a lack of support from the family and friends; or hope that one day their husbands will mend their ways. Women are often reluctant to report their victimization, as they do not have adequate knowledge and information about the legal process. Generally, police and judges are also gender biased and reluctant to interfere; indeed, they often try to convince female victims to return home making the laws that aim to protect women ineffective (Hadi, 2018).

Traditional values and patriarchal ideology are concepts that link family honor to female virtue. Therefore, they are restricted from freedom of choice (e.g., marriage) and are confined within the four walls of their

home. Pakistani gender-biased society believes that women lack reasoning skills, wisdom, and the ability to make correct decisions; therefore, they feel that giving them liberty may bring adverse outcomes. Linking the honor of the family to women and depriving them of the ability to make important decisions in their lives, transforms women into “objects” whose lives and worth are not in their own hands. Hence, women become victims of honor killings if they violate or are even perceived to be violating the family’s norms surrounding approved marital partners (Hadi, 2018). Some traditional customs, such as vani, baad, watta satta, pait likkhi, dowry, and child marriages, are also practiced to control women and protect the so-called family’s honor.

Human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal activity globally, and Pakistan is on the US’s watch list with respect to this issue, as it is a basic human rights violation. Selling women into domestic servitude, prostitution, or forced marriage comes under this category. Women who are sold are often beaten, sexually assaulted, economically deprived, and psychologically tortured to maintain their dependence on traffickers (Haider, 2015). Trafficking men and children is also prevalent as they can be sold as labor. Poverty is directly linked with trafficking. Employment opportunities, female empowerment, and law enforcement on the part of government are required to control this menace (Hanif, Waraich, and Bukhari, 2012).

Unfortunately, nothing is reported with respect to men’s experience of domestic violence in Pakistan. Men are mostly discriminated against on the grounds of their social roles. They are mostly held responsible for the provision of safety and necessities of life but they have to face the shackles of emotional burden or must, at least, control their emotions in all circumstances. They are supposed to be less affected by circumstantial factors and crying in social situations is almost prohibited for them. In cases of domestic violence, it is easy to picture women as the victims, but Eastern and Western literature (Del Giudice, Booth, and Irwing, 2012; Silverman, Choi, and Peters, 2007) is filled with stories of abused husbands, while, in Pakistan, this is severely under-reported because of the associated shame and guilt due to the fact that men do want to be seen as inferior or weak (Helgeson, 2012). In addition, environmental factors like inflation, poverty, unemployment, job insecurity, and security risks are more likely to influence the mental health of men than women. Therefore, in Pakistan and abroad there are more known cases of suicide in men (Khan, Naqvi, Thaver, and Prince, 2008) and the reasons are mostly domestic in nature (Khan and Reza, 2000).

A considerable amount of research into transgender individuals has revealed that they are victimized, stigmatized, and marginalized for violating the binary concept of gender, heteronormativity, the man code (Helgeson, 2012), and because they are perceived as homosexuals (see Aurat Foundation, 2016; Jami, 2012; Jami and Kamal, 2015). Men are more likely to be perpetrators of violence against transgender individuals than women. Again, this is because men consider masculinity superior and they, therefore, feel able to exercise power and have a sense of responsibility for correcting others. Women are communal and relationship oriented; they have nurturing abilities and empathy, which protect them from indulging in violence against others (Helgeson, 2012). All aforementioned gender gaps can be reduced if laws are implemented with full force; gender equality is ensured in education and employment; physical and mental health facilities are developed and provided; and the patriarchal mindset and disabling cultural norms are challenged from the very beginning through good parenting and cultural awareness.

Dividing the World into Horses and Zebras: Magnifying Gender Differences

Gender discrimination represents a significant social problem in Pakistan, as well as throughout the world. However, whenever we talk about gender discrimination, the first thought that comes to our mind is discrimination against women; however, the fact is that men, women, and transgender individuals are all victims of discrimination and face different patterns of oppression. This is so because a great deal of research has highlighted women as victims, while men's issues have not been discussed. Therefore, research literature is biased in favor of women.

Generally, gender differences are focused on in published research, while the similarities do not often receive attention. The reason may be that social scientists are more interested in differences in order to plan interventions (de Vries and Forger, 2015; Morrow, 2015), and it achieves larger audiences for journals and the media (Helgeson 2012). In psychological studies, most researchers concluded that many psychological gender differences are significant (Ellis, 2016), and surprisingly, various meta-analyses (de Vries and Forger, 2015; Silverman et al., 2007) also concluded that there are relatively moderate to large gender differences across various psychological constructs. However, studies highlighting similarities across gender are either under reported or camouflaged by other demographics.

Some gender differences have persisted or varied in size across cultures and time periods, while others have not (Lippa, 2009). Likewise, psychological gender differences across cultures mostly look for universal trends specific to gender, rather than highlighting the individual differences within and across it, which has probably led to under-reporting of actual psychological gender differences. Mostly, gender differences are small in gender egalitarian cultures (North America, Europe, Australia) and larger in patriarchal cultures (Pakistan, India, Far Eastern societies); this is because gender differences are learned and they emerge more strongly in patriarchal cultures that have more extreme gender-role socialization (Ellis, 2016; Hyde, 2014). Indeed, psychological gender differences seem to emerge *most strongly* in the most gender-egalitarian cultures, which allow people to pursue their desired life experiences (Conroy-Beam, Buss, Pham, and Shackelford, 2015).

In contrast to the growing evidence surrounding gender differences, only a handful of studies inferred that men and women are hardly different at all (Ellis, 2016). These argued that nobody has all male or all female characteristics. Similarly, gender difference is only deemed to occur when men and women are considered “stereotypical” in **all** gendered activities, which leads to faulty inferences. It seems as though researchers have deliberately used methods and purposefully designed their statistical analyses to declare that men and women are more stereotypical in their nature and that there are significant gender differences (see Helgeson, 2012). By highlighting gender differences, we are silently increasing the gender gap in every domain of life, where people belonging to one gender are less accepting of the other as the mindset prevails that they are different. Such beliefs give way to sexism, stereotypes, and discrimination. Therefore, we should also focus on similarities. No one is completely masculine or completely feminine, and this is true of our brains, our bodies, and our behaviors. Although men and women are members of the same species, psychologically there are important differences that should not be overlooked in order to maximize everyone’s medical, mental, and sexual health.

Conclusion

On a concluding note, it is essential for social scientists to provide an empirically determined and cultural value-based agenda for action by identifying enduring forms of inequality and discrimination against men, women, and transgender individuals. One of the general measures that can

be taken is investing in education. The aforementioned overview of gender issues and challenges in Pakistan shows that education is a tool that helps people to adjust to the changing social and cultural environment within a particular country and around the world. Education helps to increase income, reduce poverty, and improve health. Specific interventions need to be planned to promote equal civil, sexual, and reproductive health rights; to create equal opportunities for employment; to reduce income gaps and occupational segregation among sexes; to empower people to oppose violence; to make strict laws; and to provide equal opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions.

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