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Family and Institutional Barriers to Formal Education among Transgender Individuals in Tehsil Mardan, Pakistan

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Abstract: *Access to formal education remains a persistent challenge for transgender individuals in Pakistan despite recent legal recognition of gender diversity. This study examines the family and institutional barriers that restrict educational participation among transgender individuals in Tehsil Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Drawing on quantitative data collected from transgender respondents, the research highlights how family rejection, violence, and withdrawal of emotional and financial support intersect with discriminatory practices within educational institutions. The findings demonstrate that exclusion from education is not an individual failure but a structurally produced outcome shaped by rigid gender norms, patriarchal family systems, and non-inclusive educational policies. By situating the experiences of transgender individuals within broader frameworks of social exclusion and gender regulation, this study contributes to limited empirical literature from Pakistan. The paper underscores the need for family-level sensitization and institutional reforms to ensure equitable access to education and social inclusion for transgender populations.*

Introduction

In human rights education is very basic and a key driver of social mobility, economic participation, and personal development. International frameworks emphasize inclusive education as essential for achieving social justice and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015). However, access to education remains unevenly distributed, particularly for socially marginalized groups whose identities challenge dominant cultural norms. Among these groups, transgender individuals face persistent and multifaceted barriers that limit their participation in formal educational systems. Globally, research demonstrates that transgender populations experience disproportionately high levels of educational exclusion, early school dropout, and limited access to higher education (UNDP, 2017; UNESCO, 2016). These patterns are closely linked to social stigma, discrimination, and violence rooted in rigid gender binaries. Educational institutions, rather than functioning as spaces of inclusion and empowerment, often reproduce dominant gender norms that marginalize gender-diverse individuals (Butler, 1990; Connell,

2009). In South Asian societies, including Pakistan, gender identity is deeply embedded within cultural, religious, and familial structures. The family functions as a primary socializing institution where gender conformity is strongly enforced. Any deviation from normative masculinity or femininity is frequently interpreted as a threat to family honor and social respectability (Nanda, 1999; Khan, 2014). As a result, transgender individuals often encounter rejection, abuse, and expulsion from their families at an early age, disrupting educational trajectories before they can be fully established. Pakistan has taken important legal steps toward recognizing transgender rights, most notably through the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. While this legislation affirms the right to education, employment, and legal identity, implementation remains weak, particularly at the institutional and community levels (HRCP, 2019). Schools and colleges largely operate within binary gender frameworks, lacking policies and trained personnel to accommodate transgender students. Consequently, legal recognition has not translated into meaningful educational inclusion. Existing research in Pakistan has largely focused on health risks, social stigma, and economic marginalization of transgender communities, with limited empirical attention given to education, particularly at the local level (Redding, 2018; UNDP, 2017). Moreover, few studies examine how family dynamics and institutional practices interact to shape educational exclusion. This study addresses this gap by investigating family and institutional barriers to formal education among transgender individuals in Tehsil Mardan, a culturally conservative region where gender norms are rigidly enforced. By examining education through the combined lenses of family structures and institutional practices, this study argues that transgender educational exclusion is structurally produced rather than individually determined. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing effective policies and interventions that move beyond legal recognition toward substantive educational inclusion.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Transgender Identity and Social Marginalization

Transgender identity refers to a gender identity that differs from the sex assigned at birth. Contemporary social science scholarship rejects pathological interpretations of transgender identities and instead situates them within broader understandings of gender as socially constructed and performed (Butler, 1990). Gender norms are maintained through repeated social practices that define acceptable expressions of masculinity and femininity. Individuals who deviate from these norms are often subjected to social sanctions. Social marginalization of transgender individuals is not limited to interpersonal discrimination but is embedded within institutional structures that regulate access to resources, rights, and opportunities (Connell, 2009). Education, as a key social institution, plays a central role in either challenging or reinforcing these inequalities. When educational systems fail to accommodate gender diversity, they contribute to the systematic exclusion of transgender individuals.

Education as a Site of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion theory conceptualizes exclusion as a dynamic process through which individuals are denied full participation in social, economic, and political life (Sen, 2000). Education is a critical domain of inclusion, as it shapes future employment prospects, social status, and civic engagement. Exclusion from education therefore has long-term consequences that extend across the life course. Studies across different regions show that transgender individuals face higher rates of school absenteeism, dropout, and academic underachievement compared to cisgender peers (UNESCO, 2016). These outcomes are closely linked to hostile school environments, bullying, and lack of institutional support. Educational exclusion reinforces cycles of poverty and dependence, pushing many transgender individuals into informal or precarious livelihoods.

Family as a Primary Barrier to Transgender Education

The family is widely regarded as the primary source of emotional, financial, and social support for children's education. Parental encouragement, economic resources, and a stable home environment are strongly associated with educational success (Coleman, 1988). For transgender individuals, however, the family often becomes the first site of exclusion. Rejection may take the form of verbal abuse, physical violence, emotional neglect, or forced conformity to assigned gender roles. In many cases, families withdraw financial support for schooling, effectively ending educational participation. In South Asia, family responses to transgender identity are shaped by concerns over honor, masculinity, and social reputation (Nanda, 1999). Pakistani studies report that transgender individuals are frequently beaten, confined, or expelled from their homes upon expressing gender nonconformity (Khan, 2014; Redding, 2018). Mothers may express sympathy, but patriarchal household structures often limit their ability to protect transgender children. Family rejection has direct educational consequences. Forced displacement and homelessness disrupt schooling, while psychological distress undermines academic performance. Even when transgender individuals remain within their families, constant pressure to conceal identity creates stress that interferes with learning. Thus, family-based exclusion functions as a foundational barrier that shapes later institutional experiences.

Institutional Barriers within Educational Settings

Educational institutions are expected to promote equality and protect students from discrimination. However, research consistently shows that schools are among the most hostile environments for transgender individuals (UNESCO, 2016). Institutional barriers operate through both formal policies and informal practices that privilege gender conformity. Globally, transgender students report high levels of bullying, harassment, and violence within schools (UNDP, 2017). Teachers and administrators often lack awareness of transgender issues or hold discriminatory attitudes, leading to inadequate responses to abuse. The absence of gender-inclusive policies leaves transgender students without protection or recourse. In Pakistan, institutional exclusion is exacerbated by rigid gender segregation, binary admission systems, and the absence of complaint mechanisms (HRCP, 2019). Schools rarely provide guidance on accommodating transgender students, and teacher training programs do not address gender diversity. As a result, discrimination is normalized, and transgender students are often compelled to leave school.

Intersection of Family and Institutional Exclusion

Family and institutional barriers do not operate independently; rather, they reinforce one another in a cycle of exclusion. Family rejection increases vulnerability within educational settings, while negative school experiences reinforce family perceptions that education is unsafe or inappropriate for transgender individuals. This interaction produces cumulative disadvantage that is difficult to reverse (Sen, 2000). Research emphasizes that interventions focused solely on schools are insufficient without addressing family attitudes, and vice versa (UNDP, 2017). Sustainable educational inclusion requires coordinated efforts that engage families, educators, and policymakers.

Research Gap

While international literature on transgender education is growing, empirical studies from Pakistan remain limited, particularly at the local level. Existing research has not sufficiently examined how family rejection and institutional discrimination intersect to shape educational outcomes. This study addresses this gap by providing localized empirical evidence from Tehsil Mardan, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of transgender educational exclusion in conservative contexts.

Methodology

In this study quantitative methodology is used. Cross-sectional research design to examine family and institutional barriers to formal education among transgender individuals in Tehsil Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A total of 40 transgender respondents were selected using purposive sampling, as the population is socially marginalized and difficult to access through probability methods. Data were collected through a structured interview schedule comprising close-ended questions related to socio-demographic characteristics, educational experiences, family responses, and institutional treatment within educational settings. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to accommodate varying literacy levels and to ensure clarity of responses. The collected data were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies and percentages, to identify dominant patterns of exclusion. The analysis focused on illustrating the prevalence and nature of educational barriers rather than establishing causal relationships.

Data analysis

Data analysis is a systematic examination of data, using rational and statistical techniques to analyze, describe, explain, evaluate, and review the information. This research use statistical approaches to examine numerical data. Then data gathering, descriptive statistics are used to emphasize the main attributes of the comprehensive dataset.

Distribution of Participants' Ages
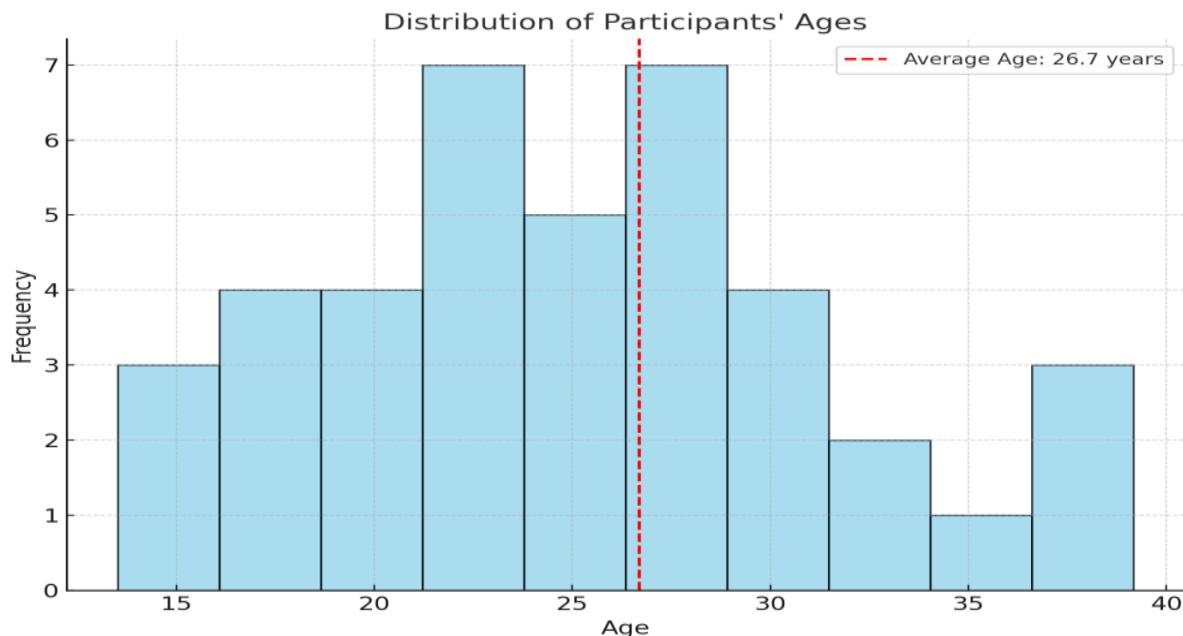
Histogram shows the age of the participants.The average age of the participants 26.7 years, with a standard deviation of 6.726.

Education level of the participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary school	6	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Secondary school	17	42.5	42.5	57.5
	Higher secondary	11	27.5	27.5	85.0
	Bachelor (BA,BSC)	6	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows participants educational background . it has been noted that 15.0% of the participants have completed primary -level -education ,42.5% have completed secondary -level-education,and 27.5% have completed higher secondary -level -education,and 15.0% have completed Bachelor (BA,BSC).

Naional ID card of the participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	18	45.0	45.0	45.0
	No	22	55.0	55.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table provide information about the participants national ID cards.it has been noted that 45.0% of the participants have a national ID card ,while 55.0% do not .

Acting or performance of the participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Acting,performance	34	85.0	85.0	85.0
	Social media influencer	6	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table illustrates the occupations of the respondents and shows that 85.0% of participants are involes in acting or performance , and 15.0% of the participants are social media influencer.

Gender realization of the respondent
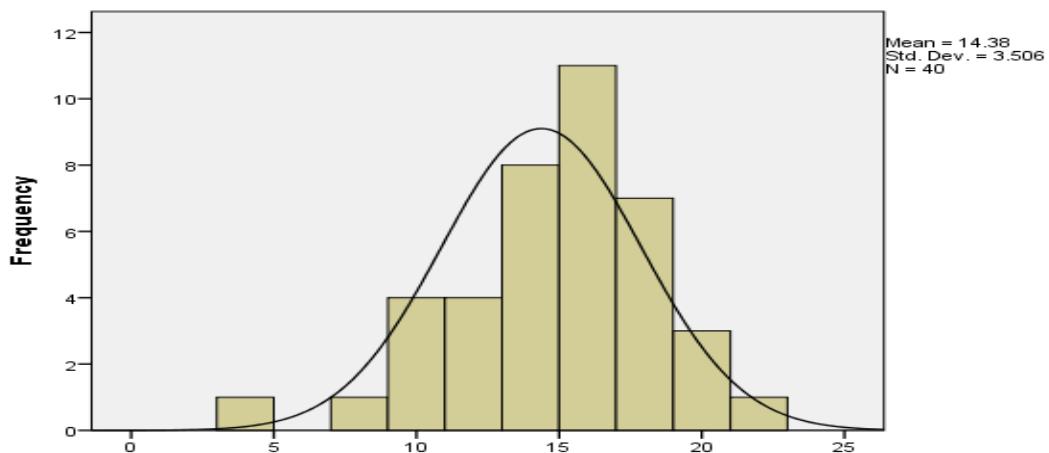
Histogram shows that the age of gender realization of respondents .The average age of the participants when they realize that their gender was different is 14.38 year with a standard deviation of 3.506.

Initial Family support

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	19	47.5	47.5	47.5
	No	21	52.5	52.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The table shows that 47.5% of the participants are initially support by their own family, and 52.5% do not .

If yes ,Who support you in your family

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Father	2	5.0	11.1	11.1
	Mother	9	22.5	50.0	61.1
	Sister	5	12.5	27.8	88.9
	All	2	5.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	18	45.0	100.0	
Missing	System	22	55.0		
Total		40	100.0		

The above table also shows that 5.0% initially support from the participants fathers side and 22.5 % support from the mother, while 12.5% support from the sister, and 5.0% support from the whole family, overall 45.0% participants are initially support by their own family members while the majority 55.0% respondents do not initially receive support from their own family.

Did anyone abuse you in your family

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	37	92.5	92.5	92.5
	No	3	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The table shows that majority 92.5% respondents are abused by their own families, and 7.5% participants do not face abuse in their families.

If yes, Who abused you in the family

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Father	10	25.0	26.3	26.3
	Brother	16	40.0	42.1	68.4
	Uncle	12	30.0	31.6	100.0
	Total	38	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.0		
Total		40	100.0		

The above table shows that 25.0% participants are abused by their fathers, and 40.0% are abused by their brother, while 30.0% are abused by their uncle, and 5.0% respondent do not face abuse in their family.

Leaving Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	31	77.5	77.5	77.5
	No	9	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The table also shows that the majority 77.5% participants left their homes and live with the same trans community, while 22.5% of the participants have no left their homes.

Did anyone force you to leave your home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	30	75.0	75.0	75.0
	No	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 75.0% respondents were forced to leave their homes, and 25.0% participants were did not force to leave homes.

If yes,Who forced you to leave home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Father	12	30.0	40.0	40.0
	Brother	12	30.0	40.0	80.0
	uncle	6	15.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	75.0	100.0	
Missing	System	10	25.0		
Total		40	100.0		

The table also shows the participants families forced them to leave their homes, 30.0% participants are forced to leave home by their father, and 30.0% participants are forced by their brother, while 15.0% participants are forced by their uncle, overall 75.0% participants are forced to leave homes by their own family members, and 25.0% participants are not forced to leave home by their family members .

Do you get social support from your family and friends

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	29	72.5	72.5	72.5
	No	11	27.5	27.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 72.5% participants met social support from family and friends, while 27.5% participants did not get social support from family and friends.

Whose support did you get more of in the family

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Father	1	2.5	3.4	3.4
	Mother	11	27.5	37.9	41.4
	Sister	4	10.0	13.8	55.2
	Friends	13	32.5	44.8	100.0
	Total	29	72.5	100.0	
Missing	System	11	27.5		
Total		40	100.0		

The above table also shows that 2.5% social support from the participants fathers side and 27.5% social from the mother, while 10.0% social support from the sister, and 32.5% social support from the friends, overall 72.5% participants socially support from family and friends, while the 27.5% respondents do not receive social support from their own family and friends.

Educational Support

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	30	75.0	75.0	75.0
	No	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table explains that 75.0% participants supported by their family in schooling,while 25.0% remained unsupported.

If yes,Who support you in pursuing your education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Father	4	10.0	13.3	13.3
	Mother	17	42.5	56.7	70.0
	Brother	1	2.5	3.3	73.3
	Sister	8	20.0	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	75.0	100.0	
Missing	System	10	25.0		
Total		40	100.0		

The table also shows that 10.0% participants supported by their father in schooling, and 42.5% participants supported by their mother, while 2.5% participants by their brother ,and 20.0% participants supported by their sister in schooling, overall 75.0% supported by their family members, and 25.0% remained unsupported.

Financial support for education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	29	72.5	72.5	72.5
	No	11	27.5	27.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

the above table presents that 72.5% participants were financially supported by their family while 27.5%were not supported.

How often are you supported by your family financially in school expenses
 Such as books and tuition fees.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	10	25.0	33.3	33.3
	Often	7	17.5	23.3	56.7
	Sometimes	10	25.0	33.3	90.0
	Rarely	3	7.5	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	75.0	100.0	
Missing	System	10	25.0		
Total		40	100.0		

The above table shows that 25.0% participants were always supported by their family financially, and

17.5% participants were often supported while 25.0% participants were sometimes supported, and 7.5% participants were rarely supported, overall 75.0% participants were supported by their family financially in school related expenses while 25.0% participants were not supported.

Parental attitudes towards education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	7	17.5	17.5	17.5
	Agree	11	27.5	27.5	45.0
	Neutral	5	12.5	12.5	57.5
	Disagree	8	20.0	20.0	77.5
	Strongly disagree	9	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 17.5% participants claim strongly agree that their parents consider education as a wastage of time and money, and 27.5% participants were agree while 12.5% participants are neutral ,and 20.0% participants were disagree and 22.5% participants are strongly disagree.

Did your close relatives try to discourage your education and isolate you at home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	52.5	52.5	52.5
	No	19	47.5	47.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table presents that 52.5% participants claim that their close relatives try to discourage their education and isolate them at home while 47.5% participants remained undiscouraged.

People treat you positively when you are exposed to the society with tran,s identity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Neutral	2	5.0	5.0	10.0
	Disagree	15	37.5	37.5	47.5
	Strongly disagree	21	52.5	52.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 5.0% participants claim strongly agree that people are treated positively in society. when they exposed with tran,s identity, while 37.5% participants were disagree with the statement and 5.0% participants are neutral while 52.5% participants were strongly disagree.

Harassment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	29	72.5	72.5	72.5
	No	11	27.5	27.5	100.0

	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 72.5% participants experienced Harassment. A Transgender person narrated that, these words were spoken to me by a young boy —Where are you going come to me, I am waiting for you darling. While 27.5% participants did not experienced harassment.

Social unacceptance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Often	5	12.5	12.5	17.5
	Sometimes	11	27.5	27.5	45.0
	Rarely	12	30.0	30.0	75.0
	Never	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 5.0% participants were always experienced unacceptance.A transgender person narrated that, these words were spoken to me, your are not allowed to return to a shop because your transgender. 12.5% participants were often experienced unacceptance while 27.5% participants were sometimes experienced and 30.0% participants were rarely and 25.0% participants were never experienced social unacceptance.

You bring shame to your family being a transgender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	18	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Agree	6	15.0	15.0	60.0
	Neutral	7	17.5	17.5	77.5
	Disagree	4	10.0	10.0	87.5
	Strongly disagree	5	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table presents that 45.0% participants claim strongly agree with the statement and 15.0% participants were agree with the statement while 17.5% participants were neutral and 10.0% participants were disagree with the statement and 12.5% participants were strongly disagree .

You are happy with your transgender community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	21	52.5	52.5	52.5
	Agree	15	37.5	37.5	90.0
	Neutral	2	5.0	5.0	95.0
	Disagree	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 52.5% participants were strongly agree, that they are happy with their transgender community.37.5% participants were agree with the statement and 5.0% participants claim neutral while 5.0% participants were disagree.

Denial of admission

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	52.5	52.5	52.5
	No	19	47.5	47.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 52.5%participants have experienced denial of admission while 47.5% participants did not experience denial of admission.

If yes ,how often did the school staff respond negatively when you tried to gain admission

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	3	7.5	14.3	14.3
	Often	6	15.0	28.6	42.9
	Sometimes	6	15.0	28.6	71.4
	Rarely	5	12.5	23.8	95.2
	Never	1	2.5	4.8	100.0
	Total	21	52.5	100.0	
Missing	System	19	47.5		
Total		40	100.0		

The above table shows that 7.5% participants were always faced negative responses from school staff when trying to gain admission. 15.0% participants were often facing negative response while 15.0% participants were sometimes and 12.5% were rarely and 2.5% participants were never faced negative response, while 47.5% participants did not faced negative response.

Did you experienced violence due to your gender identity at school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	38	95.0	95.0	95.0
	No	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table indicated that 95.0%participants experiencing violence at school, and 5.0% participants did not experience violence.

If yes ,What type of violence have you faced at school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Physical violence	14	35.0	36.8	36.8
	Sexual violence	9	22.5	23.7	60.5
	Psychological violence	7	17.5	18.4	78.9
	Verbal abuse	8	20.0	21.1	100.0

	Total	38	95.0	100.0		
Missing	System	2	5.0			
Total		40	100.0			

The table shows that 35.0% participants faced physical violence, and 22.5% participants experienced sexual violence, while 17.5% participants faced psychological violence, and 20.0%participants encountered verbal abuse, overall 95.0% participants experiencing violence, while 5.0% participants did not faced violence .

How often did the school staff or principal provide help or support in such circumstances

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	4	10.0	10.5	10.5
	Often	1	2.5	2.6	13.2
	Sometimes	4	10.0	10.5	23.7
	Rarely	16	40.0	42.1	65.8
	Never	13	32.5	34.2	100.0
	Total	38	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.0		
Total		40	100.0		

The above table presents that 10.0% participants were always supported by their teacher in such circumstances and 2.5% participants were often supported, while 10.0% participants were sometimes and 40.0% participants were rarely supported by their teacher and 32.5% participants were never supported in such circumstances, while 5.0% participants

Your school have policies that protect you and other transgender student from violence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	No	38	95.0	95.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 5.0% participants claim that their school has policies to protect transgender students while 95.0% participants claim that their school does not have rules or policies to protect transgender students from violence.

Did you experience discriminatory behavior from teacher

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	32	80.0	80.0	80.0
	No	8	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 80.0% participants experiencing discriminatory behavior from teacher while 20.0% participants did not experience.

How often did you experience discriminatory behavior from teacher

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	7	17.5	21.9	21.9

	Often	8	20.0	25.0	46.9
	Sometimes	11	27.5	34.4	81.3
	Rarely	6	15.0	18.8	100.0
	Total	32	80.0	100.0	
Missing	System	8	20.0		
Total		40	100.0		

The above table shows that 17.5% participants were always facing discriminatory behavior from teacher. 20.0% participants were often experiencing discrimination and 27.5% participants were sometimes while 15.0% participants were rarely experienced it. over all 80.0% participants experiencing discriminatory behavior from teacher while 20.0% participants did not experience discrimination.

You have experienced discrimination from classmates at school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
	Often	11	27.5	27.5	70.0
	Sometimes	5	12.5	12.5	82.5
	Rarely	6	15.0	15.0	97.5
	Never	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table presents that 42.5% participants were always experienced discrimination from classmates at school while 27.5% participants were often and 12.5% participants were sometimes experienced discrimination and 15.0% participants were rarely while 2.5% participants were never experienced discrimination.

Did you experience unacceptance in your school being a transgender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	37	92.5	92.5	92.5
	No	3	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 92.5%participants experiencing unacceptance at school, while 7.5% participants did not experience unacceptance.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that educational exclusion among transgender individuals in Tehsil Mardan is the outcome of interconnected family and institutional barriers rather than individual limitations. Family rejection emerges as the earliest and most influential factor, often resulting in emotional distress, financial withdrawal, and forced displacement, all of which disrupt educational continuity. These findings are consistent with existing literature that identifies the family as a primary site where gender norms are enforced and deviations are sanctioned. Institutional discrimination further compounds exclusion. Hostile school environments, lack of transgender-inclusive policies, and inadequate responses from teachers and administrators create conditions that discourage sustained educational participation. Educational institutions, instead of mitigating social inequalities, often reproduce dominant gender norms, reinforcing marginalization. In conclusion, access to formal

education for transgender individuals remains structurally constrained despite legal recognition of transgender rights in Pakistan. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that combines family sensitization with institutional reforms. Without transforming both private and public spheres, educational inclusion for transgender populations will remain largely symbolic rather than substantive.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for multi-level policy interventions to ensure meaningful educational inclusion of transgender individuals in Pakistan. At the family level, government and civil society organizations should initiate community-based sensitization programs aimed at challenging stigmatizing beliefs and promoting acceptance of gender diversity within households. Such interventions are essential for preventing early school dropout caused by family rejection and displacement. At the institutional level, educational authorities must develop and enforce transgender-inclusive school policies, including non-discriminatory admission procedures, gender-neutral facilities, and accessible complaint mechanisms. Teacher training programs should incorporate modules on gender diversity to foster supportive learning environments. Furthermore, coordination between education departments and social welfare institutions is necessary to provide legal documentation, financial assistance, and psychosocial support to transgender students. Without translating legal recognition into practical institutional reforms, policies will remain symbolic and fail to address structural educational exclusion.

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