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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
<p>Transgender Empowerment, Political Engagement, Social Support, Socioeconomic Inclusion, Pakistan</p>	<p>The transgender community in Pakistan faces significant social &amp; economic challenges due to entrenched discrimination &amp; marginalization. This study examines the influence of political engagement and community support networks on the socioeconomic empowerment of transgender individuals in Pakistan, using secondary data from various social surveys and community reports. By analyzing the relationship amid active political participation and access to supportive community resources, the study aims to determine how these factors refer to improved self-advocacy, employment prospects &amp; social acceptance. The findings reveal that community networks providing emotional and financial support play a crucial role in enhancing confidence and agency of transgender individuals, while political engagement offers them a platform for collective action and visibility. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing the effective strategies to promote the inclusion and empowerment of the transgender community in Pakistan. The study's outcomes will serve as foundation for future research and advocacy, aimed at addressing the unique socioeconomic barriers as faced by this marginalized group.</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Transgender community of Pakistan has always been victim of social, economic & legal repression, they are actively shunned in society. They are called hijras or Khawaja saras who are economically marginalized, unhealthy, and illiterate trans-gendered men (Fatima, Riaz, & Asghar, 2024). That is a massive win for rights under the historic 2018 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act but it is purely symbolic because there are many possible lows of implementation. However, most of the

time they remain socially marginalized, and have turned to possess less opportunity to find secure income or other means of existence such as to dance or to beg. It excludes them from larger social and political life and from maintaining economic status just satisfactory at best. It becomes needed to consider options of fading some of these barriers so that process of formation of communal unity or integration lead to development of social capital and political significance (Riaz, 2023b). Voting and social networks & interaction with authorities, have been established as vital avenues toward enhancing social & economic status of marginalized groups of people all over the world. In Pakistan, mobilization for political participation may be a useful strategy for the purpose of advocacy to make positive changes in favorable governmental option on rights & welfare of transgender people (Riaz, 2023a).

The secure and healthy community networking are essential for a process of creating a community as network of people to build a meaningful identity of who we are and what we are worth as people and for developing the personal resources to grow (Mushtaq & Visser, 2024). Still, the transgender people also know the need to win political acceptance and a voice to be able to fight homophobic or transphobic discrimination and to optimize their employment, education and healthcare, even if they cannot do this to the same extent as the gays and lesbians. Hence, this research seeks to assess how these factors work independently and in combination to empower the transgender community and provide recommendations for Pakistani policymakers, NGOs, and activists working to ensure that the Pakistani society is not only more tolerant of the TG community but also provide them with equal opportunities (Bano & Zulfiqar, 2024). Political Empowerment in the case of transgender persons entails voting & being voted into power; and doing political thinking for these individuals compel them to advocate for their rights; exercise powers and duties; and dispense their knowledge to the rest of community. It comprises civil liberties to organize for advocacy, membership in human rights organizations, forming coalitions with other marginalized communities and right to vote and stand for elections.

Still, it permits the transgender people to change the prejudiced laws and legislate for modifying the laws and acts to overcome the physical and mental health status of societies and subsequently the come out in the societies and get social visibility (Banik, Khan, Jami, Sivasubramanian, Dhakal & Wilson, 2023). The social capital of each of ten participants included institutional and informal networks that offered support with the emotions, social support and finances. This consists of family resources, friends' resources, care givers of people who are helped by NGOs, community resources and peer group resources that are safe havens that provide resource and direction. For instance, these networks give an identity feel to transgender persons, join them to fight exclusion by society; offers employment chances and builds up resistance to exclusion. Facilities, which help transsexuals deal with actual life, help them to be healthy, and confident while fighting against the transphobic culture of the society in which they have to live (Suleman, Kashif, Gul, Hamid, & Yunus, 2024). As Pakistan has amended the laws to protect the rights of transgender persons over the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, there remains research that analyses the avenues for the practical implementation of these rights along with their contribution towards the socioeconomic required mobilization.

The main features of such earlier works for example, political participation and social support are not adequately explored in regards to their interrelations and their effects on lives of transgender individuals in Pakistan. Besides this data, larger literature has primarily studied marginalization without investigating the formation of the broader framework of individual empowerment through political and communal participation (Rehman, Huang, Zhang, Mahmood, & Zamani, 2024). Still, in spite of such evidence in empirical reality, scientific data on counting on real-life effectiveness of existing community support and political advocacy programs in addressing identified critical barriers, including employment discrimination, exclusion from society and services, and inability to gain the access to public services, is rather scarce. This work is lacking theoretical frameworks that explain empowerment over these lenses but also data that describe the process that leads to these endeavors and offers the most salient information to politicians, activists, and community leaders. (Umar, Munir, & Ikram, 2023). Transgender people are Pakistan minorities who though effectively passed legislative measures to protect their rights, does not equate to the non-discrimination and structural marginalization.

They experience barriers in education and employment, healthcare and voting; thus, they cannot gain socioeconomic liberation. Since enactment of transgender Act in 2018, most of the transgender people have not been assimilated and continue to endure ethnic discrimination & social prejudice. Moreover, there is little focus on how political participation and community support networks may can address these challenges (Noureen, 2023). This research study seeks to fill this gap and assess the effect of political participation and support structures on the socioeconomic development of transgenders in Pakistan so as to point out avenue's permanency in the society (Yasmeen, Yasmin, Adnan, & Malik, 2024). The way these characteristics influence ability to develop self-advocacy, enhance career chances and increase social acceptance that is being explored in study be helpful for policymakers, non-governmental organizations and activists who are working on developing active measures for empowering transgender population. The perception, experience and narration findings of this study will not fill the previously mentioned gaps but also contribute to the formation of series of better interventions to allow those who are lured in excluded cycle to attain equitable social position.

### Aims & Objectives

1. To examine impact of political engagement on socioeconomic empowerment of transgender individuals in Pakistan.
2. To examine the role of community support networks in enhancing socioeconomic well-being of transgender individuals in Pakistan.
3. To analyse the interaction between political engagement and community support networks in shaping socioeconomic outcomes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Socioeconomic Challenges Faced by Transgender

Due to cultural stereotypes and discrimination and limited social network and resources in areas of general SDOH, the lives of Pakistani transgender individuals are significantly deprived, education,

health and employment (Raza, Tayyaba, Naeem, Nisa, Ramzan & Ali, 2024). They are aboriginal from society and don't qualify for most white-color jobs; they are reduced to degrading tasks such as pleading for food or dancing that are degrading and partial to their place in society. However there have been some progress in law some instances; the Transgender Persons Act 2018 has been effectively allowing Transgender people to claim some rights; still, there is still huge gap between paper law and practice and majority of Transgender population continue to exist in abject poverty as well as in exclusion. Due of this knowledge, this research is critical as it provides an insight of how political activity together with support networks of communities will alter socioeconomic profile of Pakistani transgender people. These are compounded by payment of poor parental care, rejection by society and little influence in political realm that will enable them to achieve economic stability and acceptance (Fatima, Jami, & Irwin, 2024). If done, these theoretical and practical gaps will result in better understanding of trajectories of social & economic integration among transgenders in Pakistan.

### Social Exclusion Theory

Social Exclusion Theory provide the framework from where systematic exclusion and denial of rights and resources within context of Pakistan can be understood with respect to Transgendered population group. The conceptual framework of SE also does not support a narrow understanding of social exclusion when it is viewed as the absence of monetary capital because it incorporates the social exclusion whereby people and societies are excluded from the rights to carry out activities, access services and have power. Thus, for the minorities such as the transgender, exclusion is made structural in form using legal barriers such as in workplace and limited employment, opportunities among others; system interferences such discriminations and stigma. This cycle of poverty, semi-social marginalization, and non-visibility will persist if no universal and adequate solutions for the transgender people's affirmative employment are configured in any country. In this drive, despite of demonstrating in this theory how disability of not being welcomed in the society has an influence of combining the possible ways through which the transexual in existence can have a decent life, it is nearly impossible for them to transform from lifelong prejudice and minority status (Khan, Abbas, & Ali, 2024).

### Community Support Networks & Socioeconomic Well-Being

The primary actors for whom transgender people struggle to attain transition to social justice and inclusion or recognize, in organizations that exclude them for work, wages & dignity. Such networks may include family members, friends, Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOS) and Peer group to financially, emotionally and socially support overcome such barriers amid transgender persons. Societies like the one in Pakistan where third gender community members suffer discrimination on issues to do with employment and access to public services, it is in such societies that such entities are so relevant to the survival and emancipation of the third gender community (Lak, Abidin, & Razaq, 2024). It also agreed with Amason and Taylor on the facts regarding the nature of the fact that 'organizations obtain survival and security from community networks and the same networks help individuals to obtain self-esteem & self- assurance. As they help in developing belongingness identity and acts as the bridges to sources of acquiring the resources such networks impact in the

improvements of the Quality of Life by offering better chances of occupations interconnection at the societal level.

### Social Capital Theory

According to the researched, social capital theory is useful when analyzing impact of communities on the improvement of the situation with transgenders. The approach to social capital that can be drawn out of this theory is that social capital refers to the ability of a worker to mobilize resources due to their position in the structure. In a nutshell, for transgender people of Pakistan these networks produce valued, emergent, discretionary resources helping them with emotional support, tangible aid and/ information or any sort of resources otherwise unobtainable. It enhances their life chances to combat social exclusion, find employment and/or get assertiveness. Considering interaction of their networks in the community support systems, the fortunes of the Transgender in a hostile place or system are boosted henceforth the socioeconomic inequalities achieved (Hashmi, Arshad, & Ibrahim, 2023).

### Barriers to Effective Political & Social Inclusion

Transgender suffered extreme political and social oppression in Pakistan because of culture based discrimination and prejudice. Thus, the Indian government has enacted the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018 and although the application of the Act is somewhat limited, the majority of transgender persons are politically and socially disfranchised or excluded from voting and mostly politics. They suffer social exclusion acknowledged culturally and religiously to erect political walls to hinder them from participating in the political system, demonstrate the political power, or even encapsulate their grievances in politic (Divan, Cortez, Smelyanskaya, & Keatley, 2016). Besides this, women are harassed discriminated and even abused for this reason they do not go out to conduct activities. These barriers also relate to exclusion in social life because they are rejected by their families, and few among them attend school, and/or do not have a job to feed themselves. Thus, these three dimensions of the legal-institutional-social barriers make it almost impossible for a transgender to claim rights and equality for the political and social participation (Costa, 2023).

### Impact of Social & Cultural Norms on Transgender Identity

Acquired culture has a central contribution in defining how transgenders are perceived in society and life they live after transitioning. As in Pakistan, stereotyping concerning the different gender role and culture and norms and norms do not allow the societal and states recognition of the rights of the transgender persons. These norms assist personal viewpoint of the person, and how the certain identification of the unique person dans within cultural norms of contained societies which may not accept or even recognize the Transgender person (Brown & Rogers, 2020). For examples, due to high levels of patriarchy of people with trans sex assigned they have high levels of stigmatization which mean they are mentally ill or genetically defective for not meeting society standards. The culture also comes into play when it comes to questions of gender identity as it either supports or hinders the chances of the persons in questions of resources and togetherness as well as political influence. In this linking, a critical social and cultural examination of such factors highlights fact that attitudes about the G dissolve minority; particularly the trans population need to be altered in

order to strengthen the protection for the rights of this specific group in Pakistan (Ahmad, Ozturk, & Tatli, 2024).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative research design, rooted in interpretivism, emphasizes understanding lived experiences & social realities of transgender individuals in Pakistan. By using this approach, research seeks to explore how political engagement and community support networks contribute to the socioeconomic empowerment of transgender individuals. Qualitative methods allow for a nuanced exploration of social contexts, meanings & experiences of marginalized groups, capturing complexity of their empowerment journey. The research relies on secondary data, gathered from various sources such as policy documents, official reports, academic articles, and relevant literature. This approach provides comprehensive understanding of policy landscape, societal structures, and support systems moving transgender individuals in Pakistan. The data collected from these diverse sources are analyzed over content analysis, enabling identification of recurring themes, patterns, and insights regarding political participation, community networks, their impact on transgender empowerment. Ethically, study adheres to strict standards by ensuring careful and respectful use of secondary data. The data is handled with diligence, ensuring that original sources are accurately represented, and sensitive information is treated with confidentiality. The research respects the integrity of data by ensuring it is used responsibly, avoiding any misinterpretation or misuse of the collected information.

**RESULTS OF STUDY**

**Demographic Profile**

The current demographics state of the Transgender in Pakistan as being in poor plight yet dangling with various social & economic challenges. Prevailing to be addressed as Khawaja Sira in Pakistan culture, one of the society's less privileged groups suffers acceptance discrimination in issues to do with education, medical assistance, and employment. Majority of these reside in big cities and the identified core cities include Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad being focal core city of community's weekly social functions. These affected individuals major in the lowest strata of our society, and majority of them work in the informal employment categories such as performers, and or beg, others are prostitutes.

Table 1 7<sup>th</sup> Population and Housing Census-2023

Population	Population and Housing Census 2017	Population and Housing Census 2023
Pakistan	207,684,626	241,499,431
Male	106,318,220	124,324,406
Female	101,344,632	117,154,694
Transgender	21,774	20,331

Table 2 7<sup>th</sup> Population and Housing Census-2023

Rural	Population and Housing Census 2017	Population and Housing Census 2023
Total	132,013,789	147,614,729
Male	67,167,099	75,592,790

Female	64,836,918	72,017,097
Transgender	9,772	4,842

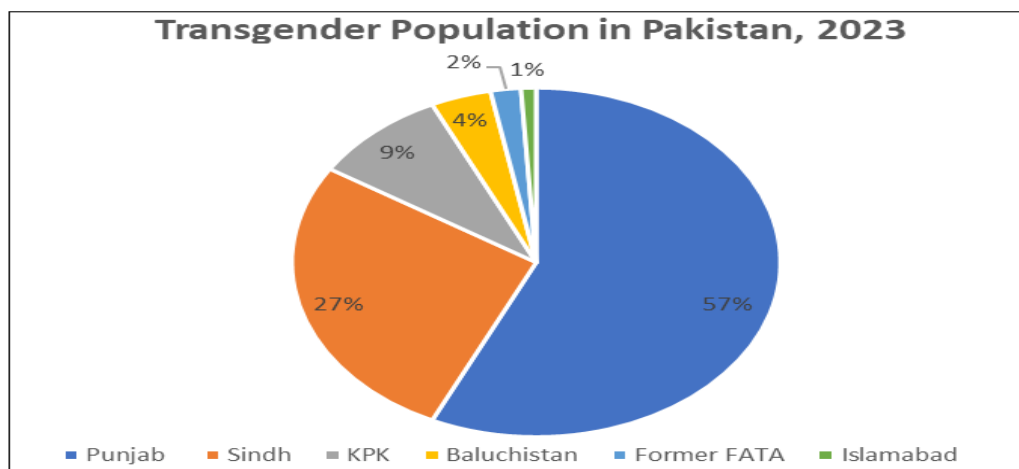
Table 3 7<sup>th</sup> Population and Housing Census-2023

Urban	Population and Housing Census 2017	Population and Housing Census 2023
Total	75,670,837	93,884,702
Male	39,151,121	48,731,616
Female	36,507,714	45,137,597
Transgender	12,002	15,489

Source: 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 (The First-Ever Digital Census of Pakistan).

The younger generation's closeted trans people are turning into political, social, & activist subjects that both need & fight for political and social acceptance of lives & equal rights despite transphobic nature of world.

Chart 1 Source: Census 2023

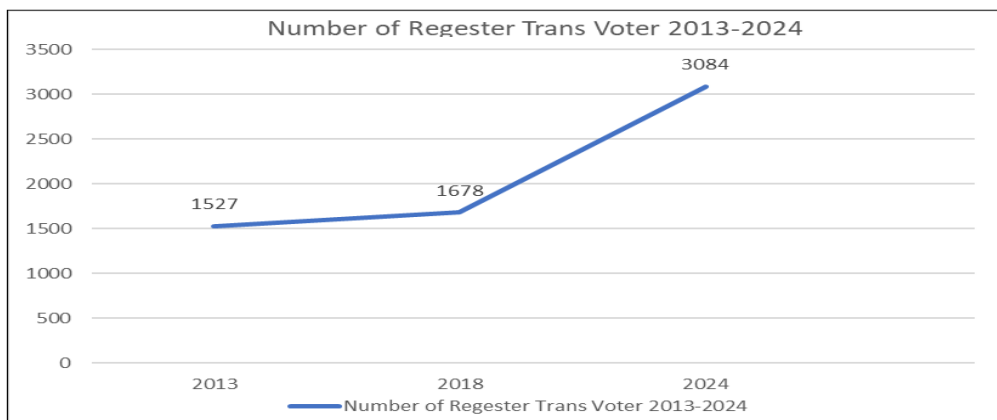


### Levels of Political Engagement Among Transgenders in Pakistan

Transgender's political participation has been more in the recent past as we see after the passage of bill Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in the year 2018. However, position concerning the participation of the transgender population in political processes is not brilliant even taking into consideration this legal framework. In a 2021 report by NCHR, while community has seemingly transformed to institutionalization through legal status and rights, the denied, marginalized and politically disenfranchised folks, whom the community is composed of, are yet to participate in the political domain, due to social prejudice and inadequate political inclusion. According to Pakistan Election Commission, there are approximately 1678 transgender people to be voted for the general elections of the year 2018 but most of the interested candidates did not come to vote due towards discrimination with polling station and the lack of voter training. Furthermore, though regulation of 2018 provided the transgender persons chances to participate in the political campaigns for the elections, little numbers of them can be able to seek electoral colt based on the barriers regarding

their participation including the lack of funds as well as discrimination they are likely to receive from the society.

Graph 1 Source: Election Commission of Pakistan



### Case in point: Nayyab Ali

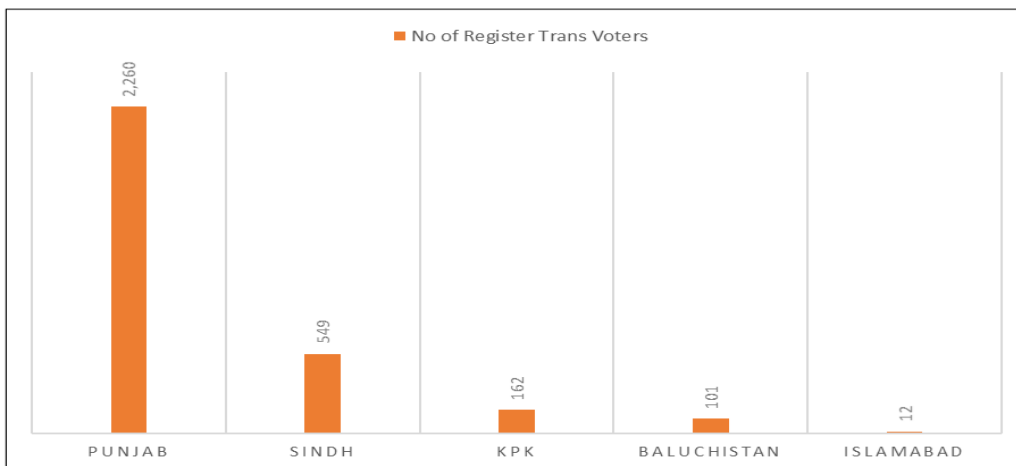
However, there have been some gains of the rights of voting for the transgender people. An example that can be delineated here is Ali contested from Okara District in 2018 now become a symbol of trans right activist. The key concept used in the campaign referred to Nayyab's purpose of raising awareness of the social and economic challenges that transgender encounters. While she did not win, her effort introduced nation to how hard candidates from transgender community fight to get into the political system and to realize that these doors should be opened to all. Because of activism, Nayyab has been given prizes globally for fight on reasonable depiction of trans people & currently pursuing research on political representation and justice. Her case helps us realize both politics and activists in politics as Transgender people are active in calling for change in policies while systems work against them.

### Impact of Political Engagement on Socioeconomic Empowerment

That is why political participation has a role to play in the status of transgender and especially the TS communities of depressed countries such as Pakistan. Introducing, the research also highlighted that there is correlation between votes and job and recognition among the transgenders in form of political powers. The politically affiliated transgenders who either vote, engage in campaigning or are members of political pressure groups are privileged to get exposure and power to wage the war against such rigid walls that deny the transgenders any chance to hold or seize on any economic fortunes. For politically active respondents even the job prospect is found to be better for the 58% transgender people as revealed in survey conducted by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in 2022. Transgender lobbyists relate to the organizations and the policymakers, the NGOs and other oppressed groups that come into contact with representatives of Transgender people – they can lobby for employment, health care and the right to education. These abovementioned plays a role towards eradicating the poverty and marginalization that fits the lives of the Transgender persons in Pakistan.

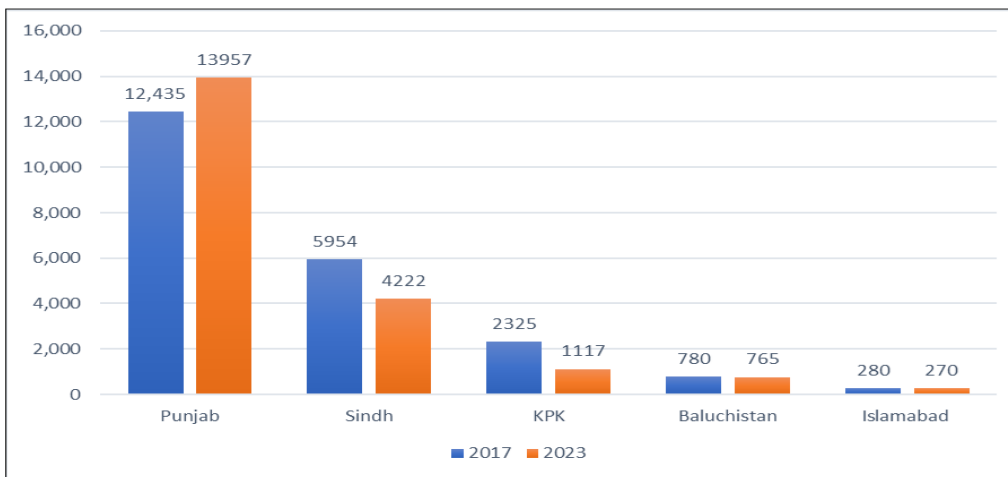


Graph 2 Source: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)



Moreover, politically participative transgenders achieve high level of publicity hence enhancing organization of the chorus for their unity. For example, inequality right deprives many transgenders from it; they politics to counter the real social exclusion and partial norms. As found out by the International Commission of Jurists in the cross-sectional survey in 2023, the transgender person who was thus involved in the political activism noted that, there was a 45% chance of the society accepting him/her. This also assist in reformation of gender diversity since the TG people are being elected as participant in Political system, change media portrayal and also policies. Altogether this has served to provide improved social integration and improved acceptance and henceforth, the opportunity of enhanced utilization of the power or resource. When the political participation rises from such community in the Pakistan, then the transition of such communities into the empowered economic entities shall be initiated thus reviving the following major structures of Pakistani society and economy.

Graph 3 Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics



### **Role of Community Support Networks in Enhancing Economic Stability**

Transgender persons of Pakistan receive community support in terms of the emotional and social support, and also from family and friends, NGOs and others in community to increase the economic development of the transgenders. However, these networks are the only source to which a most of the Transgender can look for support due to the rejection in homes and in the society. A disturbing 87% of the transgendered persons are expelled from homes by their families leaving them with the mercy of well-wishers, friends and other representatives of the community as their only source of shelter, emotional and other basic needs. Since identification is rooted in family registration many are locked out of welfare-orientated policies as majority are formally without family paperwork. Thus, to ensure the crossing of the gap has been maintained by the local NGOs and the community related bodies. For instance, the Trans-Action Pakistan and REST provide organizational services to their clients in attaining educational employment, job preparedness, and housing and medical care. These networks assist individuals in the search of an extra source of income and help deal with the mental issues.

### **Influence of Community Networks on Social Inclusion**

The struggle and integration of transgenders into society is valuable pursuit for their dissemination and the social advancement of their socioeconomic potential and the support from the networks of the society in Pakistan reflection this greatly. Starting from their families and friends, NGOs, and fellow sufferers' groups attempt to help them, support them emotionally, navigate them through all the many hurdles because the patient remains a pariah in societies today. For members living in a country like Pakistan where they experience social injustice, living on periphery in communities and deprived their basic rights, including rights to education, health care and paid work, such networks are a key source of support. According to the Human Rights Commission of the Pakistan (2023) it was established that about 75% of the homeless rely on CBOS for their basic needs and social support.

Besides, where such persons can be allowed to form mutual cooperation within such facilitative positive setting which may openly violate normal cultures. The recently glamourized Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of India enacted in 2018 has not enhanced the undignified lives of these persons' yet and change for them has to happen within networks and only these networks create the requisite strength to carry on with their existence. The advocacy of these groups has been unveiled to dramatically increase confidence and self-esteem of those in transgender's community so that they may be in position to challenge discrimination in society. For instance, UNDP Pakistan (2021) pointed out that support given by organizations enabled the persons belonging to TG society engaged in community-based activities to express themselves confidently to come out in the open by 40% improvement. Such findings present composite enmeshment of emotional & social support that work in disapproving reclusive stigma faced by transgender fostering positive self-conception and social identity.

### **Political Engagement & Community Support in Empowerment**

The present study also found some relationship between the political participation and community resources in the capacity building of mentoring social and economic development of transgenders

in Pakistan. Members who get involved in politics through voting or even membership in political pressure groups and organizations benefit from visibility they are given but more particularly from the chance it affords them to be part of process of making laws that will affect the members of the community. On other hand, non-professional care givers like families, friends, NGOs and activists help client to get emotional, social and financial support to cope with structural and social barriers. Here we have cycle that indicates that there is co-relationship amid assertiveness and confidence and self-efficacy which helps Transgender persons to fight discrimination; seek employment; seek public services etc.

Transactional social capital has been identified among the trans populations in Pakistan in recent studies where it has been observed that the users' interactions within the community are at higher socioeconomic level than the individual interaction. According to a 2021 survey conducted by HRCP trans persons involved in advocacy or politics had a higher likelihood of getting a formal job, 62% than those belonging to another category. Moreover, support networks enable coping process so that post-traumatic transgender can turn around the concern with self-advocacy regarding experiences of exclusion. The political and the support community therefore engage in mapping out a power the bare minimum of which sustains the chain for positive changes in the society. All these elements so discharge key roles of support pillars in SES empowerments of the transgenders in Pakistan.

### DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reiterative as to how political participation leads to socioeconomic status in sampled Trans People in Pakistan. Out of the room for politics participation transgender people has realized to be effective tool in lobbying for their rights and policy changes as it concerns them. As it can be seen from the data discussed in the work, the desire of the members of the transgender community to become involved in politics is a form of coming out for the population and leads to the transformations which enable the trans-people to stand up for discriminations and become activists. This sort of empowerments is even vital in the fight against exclusion and poverty several transsexuals face since it offers them the opportunity to get the access to jobs. The socio economic support networks are also as efficient in as far as the enhancement of the citizen's power within the community context. From this research it was realized that Transgender was able to handle their lives comfortably and efficiently with help from support groups due to the support received from the family and friends (Arshad, Hassan, & Yasir, 2023). These networks provide individuals with shelter to be themselves and to get assistance for engaging with social concerns. They also build up inclusion and togetherness while it is crucial as people fight prejudice and prejudice met by many transgenders nowadays.

From the analysis of historical perspective of the legal situation of transgender people. In Pakistan, it is possible to highlight several significant features for indicating cultural characteristics of this country. But there are signs of the gradual change on the legal front such as the recently enacted Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights Act) their application is still patchy. Therefore, the study seeks to educate on the reviews that have been put in place currently as policies, and experiences that the transgender persons undergo to date. In addition, the archival data will illustrate how the

political process relates to support networks in an effort to open up the possibility of enabling the opportunities (Ejaz et al., 2022). This intersectionality is printing because it points that empowering is not a one-on-one process but should involve many powers. In other words, the subject is equipped with a fundamental and sound burden of politics it can address through internal dynamics within the community for actual change in the policies regarding the issues of transsexuals. The study also suggests that it is possible to amplify the voice of allyship between the transgender advocacy groups and other minorities, and enhance political processes. However, the research also raises new issues which may need to be addressed when the political engagement as well as the community support is present.

The positive politics of giving the transgender persons the power that they need are still met with discrimination, prejudice and poverty. Current studies ask for integrative solutions in addition to voting, it should mobilize people, as well as try to demobilize obstacles that make it hard for people to get access to resources and other facilities. This implies that may also require more than one strategy to put in place and this should be responded to by government civil society & community-based organizations, which the transgender people belong to. Finally, the study re-emphasizes the call to and value of political engagement as well as community structures in the promotion of the socioeconomic transvaginal health amongst the transgender community in the context of Pakistan. The results also emphasize on rise of policies and environment sensitive to gender in order to help the transgenders deal with the challenges they face. At the very least, the awareness of impacts and struggles of this most vulnerable group in particular may help society aim efforts and provide changes that make life better for this population as well as those in society who are like them. These research's objectives significances are not only bound to Pakistan but it is possible to imagine that it can be helpful in other countries where such concerns – gender diversities as well as empowering – are rise.

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