Title:

Researching Transgenders: Dilemmas in the Field

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Summary:

In this paper I discuss findings that focus on workplace challenges faced by transgender employees in Pakistan. Existing researchers studying transgender populations have documented the marginalization of transgender individuals in society and the intense emotional distress they experience in their everyday lives. I have extended these findings by discussing my experience as a researcher studying this population, with a focus on the methodological issues I faced, such as access, refusal of potential participants to be interviewed, and risk of harm to self. The main contribution of this paper is the information it provides about unforeseen situations researchers might be confronted with while researching sensitive populations such as transgender individuals. The lessons learnt from the field also provide information for those who provide services to mentally distressed populations on the practical challenges and issues that may be encountered while interacting with sensitive populations, and how these could be addressed.

Key Words: Transgender Individuals, Mentally Distress Population, Sensitive Research

Research Paper Word Count:

6330

Introduction

It is an established fact that conducting research on sensitive topics is threatening to researcher and participants as compared to research on general topics (Johnson and Clarke, 2003). Culturally sensitive research is defined as the one which impacts researcher, research process and participants being studied (Stapels et. al., 2018). Depending upon the context, any topic can be considered sensitive. However, researching the experiences of people who are confronting stigma of some kind is documented as threatening and problematic for the researchers (Mallon and Elliot, 2019). The present study is carried out on one of the marginalized community of Pakistan i.e. transgender individuals. Transgender community in Pakistan faces a lot of challenges. The stigma and vulnerabilities this community experiences from the society at large is what is commonly shared amongst transgenders in the South Asian region (Ragins, 2008). From being disowned from family and society to disturbed professional lives, they suffer exclusions of various kinds till death. Common man from a mainstream population who is in contact with transgenders is also not considered a good human being. With this pretext, the current study reveals all the challenges faced by author while doing research on transgenders in Pakistan and how author dealt with all of the issues.

Transgender individuals are hard to reach population in Pakistan and researchers generally step back to explore about their life experiences due to attach taboo with them. So, current research filled huge gap of exploring challenges a researcher can face while studying transgenders in Asia and specifically in Pakistan. Generally, this study will add into existing literature of research methodology related to transgenders as well as minority groups. Specifically, this study will help management researchers to take precautionary measures before conducting research on vulnerable populations. It will help to go through the unforeseen circumstances beforehand and can work accordingly. This research paper includes history and background related to transgender as well as stigmatization they bear through their life. Major problems of sensitive research and personal experience have been shared in later portion of the paper. Moreover, theoretical and practical implications of this study are also explained toward the end stating that how this is beneficial for academia and practitioners.

History and Background

Gender identity disorder can be the painful lifetime experience any human being can have. In this disorder a person is confused about his or her personality as the actual gender described at birth differs from the daily life attitude, behavior, activities and interests (Shore *et. al.*, 2011). Transgender individual is explained as a person whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex that he or she was assigned at birth. This is because the actual soul is trapped in the wrong body (Thanem, 2011). Moreover transgender are people that cross every barrier of gender. For instance, they would cross dress according to their identity and live their life according to their thoughts (Davis, 2009, p. 111). Due to high discrimination trans-phobia is suffered by transgender person that is defined as "the motivating force for negative reactions towards transgender people which involve fear and disgust on the part of the observer (….) (Hill, 2002, p. 119-120). Social dysphoria is also faced by transgender people in which they are perceived incorrectly in society due to not having the confirmed gender identity (Beemyn and Rankin, 2011). Moreover, transgenders face "gender dysphoria" in which they feel stress due to mismatch between the genders assigned at birth and their actual gender identity that gives them the feeling that their soul is trapped into wrong body (Beemyn and Rankin, 2011). World Health

Organization has defined this phenomenon as "to live as a member of opposite sex for at least two years or to change the body organs according to the wish with surgical or medical treatment" (Barclay and Scott, 2006). Transgender are categorized into three major categories i.e. transgender men, transgender women and non-binaries (Beemyn and Rankin , 2011)

According to a recent study of USAID (2016), transgender people are socially less accepted in countries like Pakistan. People call transgenders with different names that are even more painful for them. They face societal rejection and hatred in the form of being called with derogatory words defining their exclusive status in the society. For instance, the most common words such as: *Hijra, Khawajsira, Khusra, Moorat* are culturally reserved for them to exclude transgender further from the mainstream population on the basis on their unique gender construction. Consequently, the social rejection of transgender people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity lead to unequal treatment towards these people in every walk of life (King and Cortina, 2010).

History of transgender phenomena is as old as the history of subcontinent itself and it has been understood differently in different periods of time. Blurred gender was believed to be full of extraordinary wisdom as compared to traditional man and women in the early subcontinent (McLelland, 2004). In old civilizations, the tribes of different types respected the phenomena of "The Great Mother" throughout the Europe, Middle East, Asia and North Africa (Poasa & Blanchard, 2004; Zucker & Blanchard, 2003; Teh, 2001). As all these cultures respected women and thought about them as the source of life. During this time, the transgenders being inspired by the respectful position of women in society carried the attire of a woman mainly since they were looking for similar associations of respect and importance. However with time it was believed that men have superior status in society due to their better performance in running the economy. With this belief eventually the inequality between the two genders strengthened and became evident in various arenas (Atamer, 2005). With this visible shift a change in the attire of transgenders from previous female attire to male attire became popular in the sub-continent (Witten and Eyler, 2007).

In South Asia, transgender are referred to with different names such as "*Khwaja Sera*" in polite way or "*Hijra, Khusra, Chakka or Moorat*" in harsh ways and are considered as those male members of society that transform themselves into women by behaving like a female publically, dressing like a women or taking female identities (Schultz & Lavenda, 2005; Nanda, 1999). In the subcontinent, transgenders have a long history as they served as care takers in the Mughal Empire and made substantial contributions in the field of poetry, art and music (Kalra, 2012). It was believed that *Khwaja Sera's* prayer was directly listened and bestowed by the God. Moreover, transgenders were appointed in the higher echelons of society, such as the ancient courts in Mughal era. However, it was believed that these people prayers help a cisgender person to get enough fortune and fertility (Conner, Sparks, & Sparks, 1997). After the extinction of Mughal emperors or culture of *Harem, Hijra/Khwaja Sera* community of Asia is suffering from marginalization social exclusion and stigmatization. On the one hand, earlier on transgenders had lived and enjoyed a respectful position in the society but on the other hand, with the passage of time, transgender in subcontinent were forced to show their association and limitation to the profession of begging, prostitution, dancing and singing services at wedding and child birth or any other happy occasion (Conner, Sparks, & Sparks, 1997). At one end it is associated as a profession but on the other hand they are limited to the field that is not very respectable in the

subcontinent. Number of legal reforms has been made in India, Nepal and Pakistan related to transgender community which proves the revival of transgender community in South Asia (Kalra, 2012).

Stigmatization of Transgender Employees

Transgender employees at the workplace face high social exclusion along with stigmatization and marginalization. While being at workplace, many transgender employees decide to remain in closet as compared to their personal life that itself is a fight with their inner soul (Ragins, 2008; Whittle et al., 2007). Unique challenges are generated due to lack of disclosure of their true identity, and the isolation faced by them from the mainstream society. This in turn has significant impact on them while at workplace in the form of further suffering from role conflict, pressure to establish a firm identity and psychological stress. All of these play a significant role in hindering their performance as an employee in their organizations (Ragins, 2008). Organizations that do not have gender sensitive policies, as well as organizations that do not support the third gender may force transgender workers to take the pressure of hiding behind the attire of mainstream gender (Tan, 2007). Research by Ragins et al. (2007) concluded that transgender employees experience high psychological distress that fear resilient negative consequences of disclosure. Furthermore, Day and Schoenrade (1997) concluded that disclosure and work place have no simple positive relationship. Another issue transgender employee's face being at workplace is of transitioning that poses two broader unique challenges for transgender employees. Firstly, transgender employees that are in transitioning phase do not readily fit into traditional gender categories. This creates tension, anxiety, uncertainty and confusion in organizational environment. Secondly, transgender employees that are in transition phase do not fit into organizational diversity management policies and practices (Ozturk and Tatli, 2016; Roen, 2002). Non-public transition process may be attempted by those transgender employees that have no support at workplace or even from the society. Furthermore, transgender employees do not reveal their actual identity if they have completed their transition phase.

Another major challenge confronting the transgender employees is shortage of financial capitals. They are paid less as compared to traditional genders, experience wastage of time and energy and become emotionally unstable that affect their careers badly (Pepper & Lorah, 2008). Transgender employees that do not fit into binary gender taxonomies face extreme workplace challenges. For instance, transgender employees have very unique experience while searching and applying for the employment in different organizations as they have to face high difficulty in securing a reputable job. According to a study carried out by Grant *et. al.* (2011), unemployment rates for transgender people are double as compared to cisgender people. As a result of being transgender, employees of different organizations reported that they do not get promotions and get fired on priority basis during divesting process (Dundon & Gollan, 2007). Moreover, this study concluded that very little or no increase has been witnessed in the salary of transgender employees (Grant *et. al.*, 2011). Cisgender employees in the organizations are unaware from the fact that transgender employees need respect at the workplace especially when they are in transition phase. So, making their fun and doing verbal abuse is a normal habit in most of the culture which set high discrimination among such people (Whittle, Turner, & Al-Alami, 2007). Moreover, transgender people get ashamed at the workplace when people call them with different abusive names (Nadal *et. al.*, 2012). Due to harassment issues, transgender employees do not open up with their colleagues except their authority figures (Dietert & Dentice, 2009).

Washrooms in organizations can be a place where transgender are being attacked verbally and physically (Nadal *et. al.*, 2012). However, if organizations do not have unisex washrooms it will definitely create a problem for the transgender employees regarding that which washroom they can use either male or female (Tan, 2008).

Transgender community lack the mechanisms for raising voice related for their personal issues. Transgender requires trust and voice relationship to be accepted informally and formally in organization and to get same privileges as other employees in organization (Bell, Özbilgin, Beauregard, & Sürgevil, 2011). According to existing literature and discussed facts in it, LGB community is three times larger than transgender community in world. So, mostly cultures where such sexual orientation is accepted have the employee voice mechanisms for LGB groups but lack voice mechanisms for transgender employees (Ashok, 2015). Research by Beauregard *et. al.,* (2018) has concluded five different factors that why transgender voices are unheard i.e. voluntary silence, mixture of trans voice within larger LGBT group, issues of adjustment, multiple voices from single transgender community and transgender employees have limited access to voice mechanisms. Transgender individuals mostly remain voluntarily silent thus withholding from their opinion to make themselves save from unfavorable circumstances (Knoll & van Dick, 2013). Due to limited employee voice mechanisms for transgender, individuals those face negative consequences become economically inactive and hide themselves from labor market (Nadal, Davidoff, & Fujii-Doe, 2014; Operario, Soma, & Underhill, 2008). Existing literature concludes that transgender employees having less organizational support lack from the supportive colleague relationships where they can easily discuss the case of harassment or abuse (Rundall, 2010).

Stigmatization by the society and high social discrimination in every field of life makes the transgender individual mentally stressful. Generally it is observed in society that transgender individuals are mentally upset due to severe family and societal rejection. This is also stated by Riggs, Von Doussa & Power (2015) in their study that transgenders had high mental sickness which were rejected by their families. All above mentioned challenges that transgender faced cause them to bear high mental illness throughout their life.

Study Context

The basic research on transgender individuals was conducted in different cities of Pakistan i.e. Faisalabad, Lahore and Islamabad. Sample size included the transgender individuals that were employed in any organization irrespective of their designation, company and job role. Basically, this study was carried out as the research work of MS Human Resource Management as MS Scholar at NUST Business School, Islamabad, Pakistan. The basic aim of the research work was to explore the challenges that transgender employee faces at workplace. Moreover, this study also explored the aspect of organizational support this stigmatized community have along with the employee voice mechanisms available for them. Total of 15 in-depth, face to face and semi-structured interviews were conducted to know about the harsh life experiences of the marginalized community i.e. transgender of Pakistan. In-depth interview guide was developed that helped in keeping the direction right toward the main aim of the research.

This paper reflects the challenges and complexities that I (first author) faced during the entire fieldwork process of my MS research in my own country where transgenders are considered a stigmatized population. The idea to write this paper emerged out of healthy discussions during

my fieldwork with my supervisors who are also the co-authors for this paper. The discussions were centered on reflecting and reaching to a more viable way of researching this sensitive and hard to reach population, which is under researched in Pakistan. Based on these discussions and my research experiences, this research paper includes the methodological dilemmas that qualitative researchers face in researching sensitive and vulnerable population along with the dilemmas which I faced during my fieldwork. The paper also includes the best possible solutions I tried depending upon the situations, discussion and practical implications on the field.

Methodological Issues in Sensitive Research

A scant literature is available on methodological issues that researchers have faced while researching transgenders specifically. The basic reason is that very little amount of research is conducted on transgenders as it is a sensitive area. While researching the sensitive issues, it is very important yet difficult to develop a relationship of trust and good rapport among the potential participants before actually interviewing them (Bahn and Weatherill, 2013). To gain the maximum access of sensitive data, the process of "fair exchange" of discussion should be followed between researcher and participant (Daly, 1992: 5). In fair exchange process researcher discuss own thoughts and experiences with the participants so they can gain the confident to share their own incidents. This is close to reciprocity phenomena which states that in qualitative research the process of sharing the experiences is two way to gain the trust of the interviewee (Acker et al., 1996).

Existing research discusses challenges that are faced by qualitative researchers during the fieldwork. Sometimes it is very difficult for maintaining distance from participants as they start considering researcher their close friend. Dickson-Swift et al (2006) and Gale (1992) discussed that keeping boundaries and being in limits during research is one of the important challenges. Moreover, while researching sensitive topics, participants discuss and disclose their painful experiences that makes the researchers emotionally distressed and it becomes hard to manage emotions sometimes (Rager, 2005; Gilbert, 2001b). Developing rapport and good relationship among the researcher is a difficult task while researching on sensitive topics (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). Another major challenge discussed in the literature of researching minority groups is related to "gaining access to the participants" (Meyer, 1993). Qualitative researchers encounter many hurdles while finding the sufficient sample size for their research. First, barrier in access of the participants is their lack of support and acceptance of researcher. Secondly, gaining access of vulnerable groups is not a single time process as it requires the multiple visits to the community for developing the trust (ibid, 1993). Any error in this process can result in refusal of interview by the potential participants (Smith, 1992). All of these issues are important to deal with while researching a marginalized community or sensitive population (Alty and Rodham, 1998).

Dilemmas Encountered

Researching on vulnerable populations and collection of sensitive data is considered as one of the difficult yet contemporary research areas in Pakistan. "Sensitive data" is an open-ended terminology that is described in literature in different ways. According to Cowles (1998), intensely discussing the personal experiences of people is known as sensitive data, whereas Lee (1993, p:4) describes sensitive research as "which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it". Researching transgenders; individuals that are socially

rejected in Pakistan involves encountering unforeseen difficulties by the researcher. During my MS research on workplace challenges and issues of transgender employees working across the Pakistan, I encountered a number of methodological dilemmas which I discuss in the subsequent section.

1. Access to Participants:

One of the most important challenges I faced during my field work was getting access to my targeted population. Vulnerable community, sensitive people, marginalized individuals and stigmatized humans are always considered as hard to reach population in qualitative research. Transgender community is considered as one of the hard to reach population (Barclay & Scott, 2006). Initially, when I started my field work, I found it hard to find transgender employees due to their lack of visibility at workplaces which I contacted as a starting point to reach my study population. This is because once my data collection began and the sample size grew bigger through snowballing, I became familiar with the ground reality of employability of transgenders in formal organizations in Pakistan. In fact, it was disturbing to find that their lack of visibility was attributed to their small employability statistics. I in fact came to know that the organizations in which I had known people as a student had no transgender employees. Faced with this difficulty, I then began emailing those multinationals and big business giants in Pakistan that claim to have a company policy of diversity. I was hoping to have access to my study population but surprisingly this effort also went in vein. Either my emails were not responded, or the response would simply say "we do not have a trangender employee at the moment. We are in the process of interviewing and will certainly let you know when one is hired."

After having these setbacks, I took the initiative to contact a very famous transgender in the capital city Islamabad, who was working as social activist and a beggar simultaneously and therefore was well connected in the transgender community. Initially she agreed to let me know about more transgender individuals who were employed and whom she was friends with. However, when I asked her to set an appointment date with few potential interviewees, she demanded money in exchange. I was not anticipating this. I as a student could not meet her financial demand; neither did I think it as a right thing to do. I therefore closed this possibility and again motivated myself and started to find potential participants. After a lot of hard work, I came to know that a private NGO arranges awareness raising seminars on transgenders who beg on streets. I visited this NGO, told them about my research and requested them to help me in arranging a few interviews with transgenders working in organizations. Through this NGO, I got one contact of a transgender who was working in a private sector organization. I interviewed him and through him I snowballed and reached other trangender employees.

Once I got the access to transgender study participants, I was confronted with another challenge. It was hard to convince them that I as a student only wanted to speak with them for my research. The very first question every participant asked was about the basic aim of the research and how it was going to benefit them. For me, making clarifications in a polite way and building trust through telephonic communication was the basic goal in this new scenario. Every participant has the confidentiality and privacy issues as well. Initially many of them even refused to talk even on phone. I let them knew very professionally that "conducting interviews" was the only intention for contacting them.

2. Refusal for the Interview

Another important issue I faced during this research was refusal from the potential participants even after getting the approval for the interview. With compliance to the standard ethical procedures of doing research on human subjects, this research was based on volunteer participation and no one was forcefully asked to give the interview and share their experiences. Many of the participants refused after committing for the time as they were feeling insecure in meeting an unknown person or either they asked that they did not want their personal life to be disclosed in front of anyone. Because of limited number of participants available in single city, I had to travel to other cities as well for conducting the interviews. Quoting one of the major incidents where I travelled 186 km just to conduct the interview of two participants. When I reached in front of their office, I got to know that they were gone from the committed place to their own personal meeting. Calling them again and again went in vein. After an hour, I received the call from one participant telling me that they both are not available today and currently not even willing to give interview. I just travelled this much after their confirmation but they refused to give the interview. With the very polite manner, I asked them that it is okay not be appear for the interview as participation was totally volunteer and unforceful. Even I requested them that if you will be willing in near future do let me know and also in case that if you know any other colleagues who are willing to participate in this research.

3. Risk of Harm
a. Emotional Distress

Since my childhood, I anticipated that transgender individuals are socially neglected people that face worst conditions all their lives as compared to cisgender people due to which they are mentally stressed but I never had an opportunity to sit and listen to their personal experiences. So, during this research listening to emotional yet highly disturbing stories made me emotionally distressed. It was very hard and upsetting for me to listen to the tragic incidents in their life, such as becoming victim to rape, family rejection, verbal and emotional harassment cases. After each interview I, therefore, wrote down my experience and reflections in a diary, which served as a cathartic experience for me. In addition, I went out on light mood tea parties or gatherings with my friends to get to a normal state. Having a chit chat with the close friends when I got stressful after listening to these horrible incidents was the best solution I tried. It helped me coming out of that phase because as qualitative researcher it is very important to work actively without any stress.

b. High Insecurity at Interviewee Place

Apart from bearing the emotional stress during the interviews with transgenders, physical risk was parallel to it due being uncomfortable at interview place. I placed myself in a physical risk for collecting data where mostly participants called me at their homes for the interview. Quoting about the very first incident, the participant called me to visit his house for the interview. The house location was unknown for me as it was not in my own hometown. When I reached the exact location, the area felt haunting as it was covered with large big trees having no people around. The participant was living on fourth floor in a very small flat. Overall building was giving a horrible view due to its shabbiness. I called the interview from the ground and he peaked through the window of the fourth floor to call me up at his studio flat. Firstly I thought not to go up then as a researcher I again kept myself motivated and strong. It was very much

unexpected for me as I had never thought that I would go at such an isolated and dark place for an interview. On entering the flat, I found two of his friends sitting on the kitchen floor, and upon asking I got to know that they were sniffing some drugs. Interviewee took me to his personal room and locked it from inside. After few minutes of starting the interview some weird noises started coming from outside. This scenario made me so scared and insecure that I closed the interview in haste as I could not reach to a proper closure that I imagined before this very first interview.

Quoting another incident which shattered all my confidence even before staring the interview was another horrible experience. I took interview at a participant's home which was full of her transgender friends. At the time when I reached for an interview, they were having their own gathering in the living room. Transgender individuals were joining loud, over friendly and musical gathering at fast pace. Huge body and serious face with masculine look and female get up, my interviewee's transgender mother also came to meet me before the interview. Having a small home full of transgenders partying and being introduced to a mother who herself was transgender, which I never imagined shocked me completely. They were all older than me, heavy built and tall. I felt unsafe and became worried as my mind started thinking about the worst possible conditions I can go through at that moment. It was also my very first experience to observe the transgender community in such a large number at a private place.

Despite being negatively impacted by all these scenarios, I decided to keep myself motivated to do this research. The best solution I tried was to portray my study participants that I am confident, calm and well composed. I kept on reminding myself that it is better to keep control on your nerves, be strong and emotionally powerful. In this situation, the most important backup safety plan I used was that I informed my very two close friends who live in that city about the interview quickly when I reached the participant's homes. In both incidents, I sent exact home locations to my friends on whatsapp and asked them to give me a call after an hour to check whether everything is okay if I will not text you myself within an hour. This was emergency backup plan I used. In first incident I closed the interview very quickly, said good bye in positive tone and came downstairs. I quickly informed my friends that I am fine and interview is finished. Second time, it went little longer so my friends text me for asking about safety and I informed quickly that till things are going better.

c. Pre and Post Interview Sex Offers

Transgender community in Pakistan is living hand to mouth. Earning through respectable means does not allow them to meet their financial expenses because people belonging to this community are forced to remain confined to the derogatory and low paid informal labor of dancing, singing and prostitution. In addition, those transgenders who are formally educated and can utilize their skills and talents in formal organizations are either unemployed or underemployed. With economic deprivation the psychological deprivation is also tied due to the societal rejection they face. Being human, their sex desire also remains unfilled. Due to these reasons, they are forced to do sex work even if they are doing jobs other than prostitution. As a researcher, I faced encounters in which few participants would become over frank with me. I for instance, in my role of a researcher would contact them via text or call, however, few of the transgenders after being interviewed would consider me as their 'good friend' and started contacting me. Having feelings of empathy for them I talked to them nicely because I knew that these individuals are always neglected by the society and no one is there to listen to their painful

situations. I thought that since they are rejected by their family, friends, society, and colleagues so they just want to talk to someone who understands them. I did so and tried to discuss things in a friendly manner. But without my knowledge, this sent them a wrong message. They felt that I was interested in them and that was when transition from researcher role to 'good friend' role happened. The meaning of 'good friend' for them however was constructed in light of their own realities of life which considered for them a person as 'good friend' on whom they could rely physically part from emotional reliance.

I also faced the challenge of received sex offers in the pre-interview phase. Pre-interview offers were harder to handle, as they were the potential participants and directly refusing them was equal to losing one of the participants. One of the potential participants used to text and call me in night even before I met her face to face. He used to say that he wanted to talk to me all night. One night he started calling me after not responding to his text messages as he wanted to have a cybersex with me. It was very shocking to get sex offers from transgenders because being from privileged class, having support from my family all over life, belonging from cisgender society, cultural difference and supporting parents this was unexpected for me.

Handling this situation tactfully was very important for me as a researcher. This is because I was not in a position to lose any participant as it was very hard to find this vulnerable population in Pakistan. The basic approach I used was to deal with them in very polite manner and making them understand that I am not into such activities.

d. Financial Demands by Interviewees

Before finalizing the area on which I researched, it was essential to have the potential participants so that once I was done with finalization of everything then it would be easy to start data collection. This was also necessary to know that whether sufficient amount of sample size was available or not. Due to all this, in initial stages I started to find the transgenders who were employed. One of the potential participants exploited me as she came to know about my most important need of the hour. She started asking for the money per participant she will refer me for the interview as snowball sampling technique was used. One of the participants even asked for the monetary reward after giving interview despite that there was no such commitment. She asked that I have given you my time so you have to pay me in any case.   Being a student and having budget constraints for the research it was difficult for me to manage this issue. It was not even possible because if I paid one participant then I would have to pay all of them. For making them agree without any monetary benefit was quiet hard. Contrarily, transgender individuals also wanted that their voice should be raised on good platforms so their issues can be resolved. So before taking interviews when I would tell them that this research will play its small part to raise your issues in education industry, few of them would show their willingness to give an interview. In addition, I also assured them that through academia these issues will be discussed with the industrial linkages from where the possibility of bringing reforms for acceptance of the transgenders in industry is a possibility. So after understanding the core aim and impacts of my research they agreed to explain their genuine concerns related to the employment. As my fieldwork progressed, I also learnt that because the mainstream society treats them negatively and does not give a fair share for their services, therefore they have no other choice but to grab every opportunity which allows them to earn monetary rewards.

Discussion

The paper presents the issues that a qualitative researcher face while researching sensitive and vulnerable population. Researching marginalized groups is a stressful process for a qualitative researcher. Sharing the lifelong sad experiences of the stigmatized community make researcher emotionally distressed. Even some stories are felt more painful and triggered heart wrenching feelings when listened again and again on audio recording for transcription process. Numerous researches also stated that interviewees get mentally distressed, while probing into the personal experiences of participants while collecting sensitive data (Lee and Renzetti, 1990; Booth and Booth, 1994; Corbin and Morse, 2003). Focus on researchers' well-being along with the participants' health should be paid importance during the field work as both get exhausted and tired by listening and telling the stories that gives them emotional stress (ibid, 1994). Hubbard et. al. (2001) also explained that qualitative researchers feel themselves as vulnerable when they are surrounded by minority groups. Literature called it a situational risk where the data is collected in a particular setting where researcher feels threat from the interviewee (Lee, 1993). Researcher's physical safety is at threat when he decides to enter the stranger's home without knowing the stability of the interviewee or any person inside the home (Bloor et al., 2010). So, it is better as a researcher to take precautionary measures while researching such mentally stressed population. In line with these existing works on qualitative research I also experienced at times negative and powerful feelings from my participants, I many times felt helpless and vulnerable during my research work on transgender employees. Moreover, it is considered risky to research on transgenders as they are minority group in Asia.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Dilemmas encountered proved that researching transgender individuals is the challenging task. Physical harm, gaining access from participants and making them agree for the interviews were the major challenges faced during the field work. Thorough study of this article will provide the qualitative researchers with depth of issues they might encounter while researching sensitive, vulnerable and hard to reach populations. It will make them mentally prepared and help in arranging the precautionary measures for the challenges they are going to encounter while being in field work. Unforeseen situations might be disturbing for early beginners in qualitative research that may harm the actual required output of the research. Also unique scenario and issues that were encountered while researching on transgender individuals will help the researchers of gender diversity and inclusion to know about the methodological issues they are going to face. The solutions for all the dilemmas mentioned will let qualitative researcher know about the possibilities with which they can solve the issues if they face during research

Currently there are many private and government organizations which are working in social sector all over Asia for rights of minority groups. Due to having harsh experiences of life, minority groups are mentally distress. Managing such population can be harmful if certain measures cannot be taken before hand. NGOs in Pakistan are currently working hard for mentally distress transgender population and making sure to provide them the basic necessities of life as they are badly deprived of them. The lessons learnt from the field work would also contribute towards informing the service providers for mentally distresses population about the practical challenges they will face while interaction with them and solution they can try for that. It will help them to know that how to engage themselves with sensitive populations on which they are working for their betterment.

Moreover, this paper also adds to the exiting literature of methodological issues of researching hard to reach population in qualitative research. As very little research is available on the issues the qualitative researcher face in Pakistan and Asia while researching transgenders. Researchers hesitate to discuss about their problems encountered while researching transgenders as people consider it a taboo to be working with them. So this paper completely exposes all the issues that a researcher can encounter.

Conclusion

This paper gives a reflexive account of my own challenges that I faced while researching on transgender community in Pakistan. Researching sensitive population is a challenging task as a qualitative researcher. So, it is better to be prepared beforehand about the issues that a researcher is going to face. This paper mentioned that as a qualitative researcher, I faced certain issues in researching transgender employees i.e. getting access to the participants, emotional distress by listening their harsh life experiences, feeling of insecurity at interviewee place, pre and post interview sex offers, monetary demands of gatekeeper and potential participants, refusal for the interview from potential participants and much more. Apart from mentioning the dilemmas encountered during the fieldwork, this research also highlighted the solutions that I tried when I faced challenges. Moreover, practical and theoretical contributions of this methodological paper were also emphasized. In nutshell, this study informed qualitative researchers about the challenges they can face while researching marginalized and stigmatized community. Furthermore, service providers, NGOs and social sector organizations working on transgender community can also take help from lesson learnt during the field work.

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