

## Guest Editorial

# Transgender in Pakistan: Gender Identity and Expression: Disease or a Choice?

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The socially created roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities are referred to as gender while sex is classified as either female or male. The biological characteristics including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive structures that make up assigned sex at birth. Despite having varied connotations in various cultures and geographical areas, the terms "sex" and "gender" are interchangeable.<sup>3</sup>

The Transgender people comes under an umbrella in which the gender identity and expression varies from the cultures and traditions defined by the society. The gender identity may differ from the sex assigned at birth<sup>2</sup>. The historical perspective in Pakistan shows that they were commonly known as Khawaja Sara, Hijras, Zanana, Shemale, Chakkha, Kinnar and Khusra which varies in different languages and different regions of Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> This community follows a kinship system known as guru-chela system.<sup>5</sup> During the Mughal period they were employed as guardians of the zanan khana in the royal palaces.<sup>6</sup> According to population census in Pakistan 2017, a total of 10,418 people have been identified as transgender which is undefined and does not describe their expression, gender identity and their sex identified at birth.<sup>7</sup> These people in Pakistan and India are recognized differently but in other developed and socially liberal countries their identity differentiates from being intersex and transgender. The different sexual behaviors, expressions and common gender

identity terms can be described are as follows:<sup>8-10</sup>

- **Intersex** is a person with a sexual or reproductive anatomy that does not adhere to the traditional ideas of what it is to be female or male.
- **Cisgender** is a term applied to someone whose gender identification matches the sex they were given at birth.
- **Cross dresser** is a person typically as Cisgender man wears female clothing for fun and entertainment in private or public.
- **Drag king and queen** is a performer who exaggerates behavior and costume dresses to their opposite gender for the purpose of entertainment in public events.
- **Gender Fluidity** is a sense of gender identity which can be changed over time or even from day to day.
- **Non binary** is a gender identity who are not solely male or female and recognizes as other gender.
- **Trans or Transgender male or female** are individuals whose given gender at birth was male or female but who identify as the opposite gender. These terms can also be employed to characterize after surgical procedures.
- **Gender Dysphoria** is described as the person's body doesn't match their gender identification

while experiencing difficulty, sadness, and anxiety. It is a condition that is sometimes referred to as gender identity disorder.

According to World Health Organization the transgender people vary in all the identities and expressions and may not be considered as a mental illness or a disease but a choice of adaptation due to malfunction in structural anatomy or a personal mental satisfaction or for fun and entertainment industry.<sup>11</sup> The transition and transformation of a gender is opposed strictly in different regions due to social, cultural and religious beliefs.

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