

Full Title:

Caged in Violence: Exploring the Dynamics of Beelayi, Transphobia, and Organized Gang Violence in Karachi, Pakistan

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Khwajasira is an indigenous South Asian gender-spirituality and gender identity recognized by the Government of Pakistan as a gender separate from man and woman

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ABSTRACT

This research report focuses on the phenomenon of "beelayi" - a uniquely Pakistani form of violent masculinity targeted towards transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. Using Social Learning Theory, the report examines the process through which young men are socialized into perpetuating transphobic violence. The report draws on qualitative data collected through interviews with members of the transgender community in Karachi, Pakistan, and highlights the impact of gender-based violence on the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of transgender individuals.

The report defines "beelayi" as a form of violent sexual interest of cisgender men in khwajasira persons, trans-feminine people, and effeminate men where masculine hegemony is actively exercised on the queer person and sexual and intimate favours extracted from them under duress. It describes how organized gang violence in Karachi manifests as beela violence where khwajasira dancers are enslaved by beelas in co-dependent relationships, with violence enacted on the khwajasira person if she breaks the code of conduct of the relationship. This results in a violent hegemony over trans bodies, which contributes to increasing the masculine value of the beela in his gang through masculine posturing. Khwajasiras are trapped in a gang economy of crime and intimidation.

The report argues that transphobic violence is a deeply ingrained issue in Pakistani society and calls for the criminalization of gender-based violence against transgender individuals. It recommends improving the police and criminal justice system to penalize and then rehabilitate offenders. The report also highlights the need for rehabilitative programs for first-time and repeat offenders of transphobic violence. Such programs should address a person's social learning of

transphobic violence, healing from violence they've experienced and observed growing up in tough urban neighbourhoods, and unlearning patterns of thinking that justify hegemonizing a trans person for sexual or extractive pleasures.

The report concludes by calling for further research to focus on piloting violence reduction interventions and challenging violent masculinities. It argues that this is necessary to create an environment where the rights of transgender individuals are respected and protected. The report highlights the importance of understanding Pakistan's unique cultural and historical context to develop effective solutions to address transphobic violence. It suggests that by criminalizing transphobic violence, improving the criminal justice system, and promoting rehabilitative programs, we can work towards creating a safer and more inclusive society for transgender individuals in Pakistan and beyond.

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON TRANSPHOBIA IN PAKISTAN

Transphobia is the fear, hatred, or discrimination of transgender or gender non-conforming people, who are also known as khawajasira, hijra, or khusra in Pakistan. Transphobia can manifest in various forms, such as verbal abuse, harassment, exclusion, denial of rights, or physical violence. Transphobic violence is any form of violence that targets or harms transgender or gender non-conforming people because of their gender identity or expression.

Transgender or gender non-conforming people in Pakistan face multiple challenges and risks due to transphobia and transphobic violence. Despite being legally recognized as a third gender since 2009 and having the right to vote and obtain identity cards since 2018, they still face social stigma, discrimination, and marginalization in various aspects of life, such as education, health, employment, and housing. They are often forced to live in isolated communities, where they rely on begging, dancing, or sex work for survival. They are also vulnerable to violence from family members, religious groups, police, or criminal gangs, who often target them for extortion, rape, or murder.

According to a report by Trans Action Pakistan, a transgender rights organization, at least 73 transgender or gender non-conforming people were killed and 329 were injured in Pakistan between 2015 and 2020. The violence is widespread across the country but especially prevalent in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) region, where conservative and extremist forces are more influential. For example, in April 2022, eight transgender women were shot in three brutal attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, resulting in three deaths and five injuries. The perpetrators of

these attacks are rarely identified or prosecuted, and the victims are often denied justice or protection.

This research report aims to examine the causes and consequences of transphobia and transphobic violence in Pakistan and explore the possible ways to prevent or reduce them. Using Social Learning Theory as a theoretical framework, this report will analyse how transphobia and transphobic violence are learned and reinforced through social influences and processes, and how they can be challenged and changed through social interventions and education. This report will also highlight the voices and experiences of transgender or gender non-conforming people in Pakistan and their struggles and resilience in the face of transphobia and transphobic violence.

A NOTE OF INVESTIGATOR REFLEXIVITY – HOW THIS RESEARCH WAS BORN AND THE ANTECEDENT CAUSES OF THE STUDY

On 20th February 2021, we, the principal investigators, were at a khwajasira party in Karachi. Most of the attendees were working class, residing in the lower-income boroughs of Karachi - a metropolis that is classist by design. This event was one of the few opportunities where they could collect and be expressively, and exceedingly, queer. Many of these people prepared a month in advance for this party and cut corners to save money for the \$8 entrance fee and their extravagant outfits. Sequined suits, risqué fishnet, vibrant makeup, bling, jewellery, and traditionally festive attire; this party had an expansive range of aesthetics and styles, pushing the boundaries of fashion. The paper ticket bore the name of the event, “*Laal Ishq*,” or “Red Love.” It was a moment for queer pride, belonging, and desire; hundreds of strangers and lovers cramped on a dance floor, singing, gossiping and laughing. Contrary to national and international Orientalist narratives, a party like this takes place at least once every month in the Islamic

Republic of Pakistan, where busloads of queer people are always in attendance. Karachi's urban past is replete with indigenous queer communion (Khan B. , 1997) (Naqvi, 1997).

And yet, another character has increasingly emerged on this party scene; the "*beela*." In Hijra Farsi, the language spoken by pan-Indian indigenous queer communities (with various regional dialects), *beela* translates to "*badmaash*" in Hindi/Urdu, or gangster in English. However, *beela*'s meaning has more contours. It has an element of lust; the *beela* is lustful of the feminine queer subject. The *beela* works in sync with his peers to ensnare the object of their lust. The *beela* is aggressive and capable of deploying violence to meet his ends. The *beela* is a distinct gender-sexuality itself.

They slowly trickled into the party, arriving two or three at a time on motorbikes, and were conveniently let in by the bouncers and gatekeepers. Quietly, they surrounded the dance floor, the actual party attendees oblivious to them, lost in the magical queer euphoria they were feeling at that moment. The *beelas* awaited their opportunity to pounce; many of them did not even know each other. They instinctively knew what each wanted and worked collectively to advance that objective. After all, it was only a matter of time before someone was too inebriated, too isolated, and too vulnerable for them. Gradually but surely, they started closing in around the dance floor, nearing the queer bodies that were, by this point, intimately familiar with their tactics and knew how to manage them. Before long, they were on the dance floor, groping, harassing, catcalling, and coercing queer bodies. By this point, those with the appropriate foresight left the party. Unfortunately, the ones left behind were left to the *beelas*' devices. By the time the sun had come up and the last buses had left the party, several queer persons had been violently harassed by groups of men and at least one person had been drugged and gang raped.

Just two weeks prior, we were similarly surrounded by a group of *beelas* at Sea View – a beachfront promenade, one of the few public leisure spaces in Karachi. We were groped, harassed, and coerced into disclosing our contact information to one of them. It was a terrible end to what could have been a pleasant night out. Sea View is one of the most popular cruising spots in Karachi. On any given night, you can come across all kinds of AMABs looking for intimacy; khawajasira (an indigenous queer category/culture) elders on a casual night out with their partners, feminine young men offering sex work, *mujra* performances (a popular South Asian dance form), and all kinds of men looking for sex. Various queer bodies glide between and around an ordinate public - families with children, bicyclists, retirees, and heterosexual lovers - with no one being the wiser. Only those with the knowledge to identify this queer landscape can see it transpiring in front of them.

Once again, the setting was one of queer exuberance. Yet, it was tainted by the presence of the *beela*. The dynamics of what happened with us at Sea View and what happened at Laal Ishq are shockingly alike – small groups of men, many of them in their early adolescence, coalescing around a queer (or effeminate) person to simultaneously terrorize and extract pleasure out of them (Ward, 2015). We raised our voices online against this targeted violence, and as a result on the 19th of September of 2021, we were attacked by a group of 40 *beelas* in an attempted abduction and gangrape – a case that went on to start a national conversation on *beela* violence (Majeed, 2021).

For us, this scenario is reminiscent of what happened on New Year's Eve in Cologne, Germany, in 2015-16. Hundreds of men, often strangers to each other, strategically surrounded groups of women to eventually grope and assault them (Eddy, 2015). Since then, a significant body of

research has emerged to add to existing knowledge on masculinities and the complex interplay with hegemonic (sexual) performativity, sexual objectification (and fetishization), and forced migration and displacement (Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016). The anecdotal and experiential evidence from queer communities suggests that ethnicity is critical in determining whether a male is a *beela* – migrants in Karachi are always implicated. We hypothesize that this is consistent with the incidents in Cologne, Germany; specifically with the work that has emerged since then on forced migration and hegemonic, dislocated masculinities (Huizinga & Hoven, 2020). With our research project, we aim to explore this unique and contextually specific phenomenon of violence against queer bodies in Pakistan.

RESEARCH AIMS:

By examining the *beela*-phenomenon, we concurrently intend to

- i. Bring attention to indigenous gender-sexuality regimes in South Asia.
- ii. Problematize Euro-American gender-sexuality regimes, imported into the Global South through Neoliberal cultural homogenization.

For us, this sets a macroscopic research agenda with further specific research questions embedded in it.

Macroscopically, we aim to assess how the nation-state's violence is exacted upon queer bodies through racialized interlocutors, the *beelas*, within a contextually evolving public space that is the site of sex and desire. Specifically, we are inquiring how race, class, citizenship, gender-sexuality, and urbanism enmesh, morph, and evolve into one self-sustained intra-active unit that simultaneously interacts with the broader elements around it.

To operationalize this agenda, we are being guided by the following thematic questions:

- i. How does cruising happen at Sea View, Karachi? What indigenous manifestations and spectra do we see of masculinities, femininities, and other gender-sexualities? What is the Bourgeois understanding, and response, to this?
- ii. What are the patterns of aggressive or coercive cruising at Sea View, Karachi? Who gets to say no, not be harassed, and have a good time? And can the same person experience all of these at once?
- iii. Who is profiled for aggression and how? Who is profiled as a potential partner or client? And who is profiled as a *beela* by queer bodies and the *beelas* themselves? How do race, class, and citizenship affect or interact with this practice – especially in the context of Karachi’s documented relationship between urban violence and ethnicity (Gayer, 2012)? Finally, how are these manifestations of race (and class) gendered?
- iv. How do social and institutional narratives within the police and landlord community influence the inclusion and exclusion of khwajasira persons in Karachi? And how does this impact risk of violence?

WHAT IS THE ACADEMIC AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY?

The Pakistani queer and feminist activist polity is rapidly evolving. The 2018 Transgender Persons Act was unanimously passed by the Majlis-e-Shoora in which gender is given a radically progressive definition: detaching gender from sex and making Pakistan one of the few legislative systems recognizing this distinction. In this process, the 2018 Act was able to successfully

unshackle centuries of European colonial biopolitical discourses regarding gender-sexuality and create new spaces for indigenous queer narratives to take root. What makes the 2018 Act even more remarkable is that it was deemed Sharia-compliant by the Council of Islamic Ideology, Pakistan's premier federal religious authority for advice on legislation.

Also in 2018, Aurat March emerged as a quasi-queer feminist movement that has since grabbed national attention with its call for gender justice. Although public opinion on it is polarized, Aurat March has nevertheless generated new and interesting discourses and pathways for queer bodies among the public and within queer communities. Dissidents of Aurat March across the aisle agree on one thing; its reliance on secular Euro-American gender-sexuality "activist frameworks" (such as "gay marriage," Pride flags, Anglo-Saxon personal identifiers, and visibility politics) and concretized LGBTQIA++ identities, neither of which are rooted in indigenous activist praxis, are alien to Pakistan (Khan F. A., 2019). Indeed, intra-community conversations among queer subjects are divided among the tiny, educated Bourgeois queer intelligentsia and a massive indigenous queer population. Whereas the former prioritizes the Euro-American activist framework and perceives indigenous queer logic as incomplete, perverse, or abnormal, the latter aims to create a grassroots movement that attempts to popularize a new gender-sexuality regime where queer is understood as a fluid verb rather than a static identity/noun (Reddy, 2007). This positions our research within a lens that examines contemporary queerness as an emergent and gendered product of (anti)nationalism and vice versa that communicates different ways of being for different socio-economic groups or classes, instead of being a singular and cohesive national phenomenon.

It is this context that informs khawajasira and indigenous queer activists' position on policy, who are currently lobbying in favour of Provincial legislation for the emancipation of queer persons in Sindh and Punjab (Moiz, 2020). Indeed, for all its benefits, the 2018 Act still has serious shortcomings due to Pakistan's federated status, following the 18th Amendment to its Constitution in 2010, and activists are attempting to overcome them through these Provincial laws. Our research aims to provide critical information exploring indigenous gender-sexuality regimes for these legislations that otherwise have extraordinarily little local research to inform policy. Furthermore, despite the safeguards enshrined in federal laws, violence exacted by *beelas* against khawajasira, and indigenous queer persons remains high (Khan & Rauf, 2019) (Khan A. R., 2021) (Dawn, 2021). We hope to highlight the dynamics of the *beela phenomenon* so that future legislation can be drafted by the provincial and federal legislature to counter this threat more robustly.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE ON TRANSPHOBIA AND RELATED ISSUES IN PAKISTAN AND OTHER CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Transgender people are those who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, or who do not conform to the social expectations of their gender. Transgender people face various forms of discrimination, violence, and stigma in many societies, due to the prevalent culture of transphobia. Transphobia is a collection of negative attitudes, feelings, or actions towards transgender people or transness in general.

According to Wikipedia, transphobia is a collection of ideas and phenomena that encompass a range of negative attitudes, feelings, or actions towards transgender people or transness in general (Wikipedia, n.d.). Transphobia can include fear, aversion, hatred, violence or anger towards people who do not conform to social gender expectations. Another source defines transphobia as any negative attitudes (hate, contempt, disapproval) directed toward trans people because of their being trans (Bettcher, 2014). Transphobia is a form of oppression and discrimination that can affect the mental and physical health of transgender people (Zambon, 2021). Transphobia can also be seen as a type of bigotry and irrational fear (Boskey, 2022).

In Pakistan, the transgender community is known as khwajasira, which is an umbrella term for transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people often referred to as the ‘third gender’. Historically, khwajasiras have a respected role in early Islam as guardians of significant religious sites, and trace their history to pre-colonial India, functioning as political advisors, entertainers, and spiritual leaders (Ali, 2022). However, in the contemporary context, khwajasiras face serious and significant challenges because of the prevalent ‘transphobia’

culture. This results in the possible denial of legal, political, socioeconomic, and health rights of this marginalized community which struggle with recognition and acceptance in mainstream society (Sharif & Ali, 2020). Some of the issues faced by khwajasiras in Pakistan include:

- **Lack of legal recognition and protection:** Despite the passage of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in 2018, which grants khwajasiras the right to self-identify their gender and access basic services, the implementation of the law is slow and inconsistent. Many khwajasiras still face difficulties in obtaining identity cards, passports, inheritance, and property rights.
- **Violence and harassment:** Khwajasiras are often subjected to physical, sexual, and verbal abuse by the police, family members, religious groups, and the general public. They are also vulnerable to hate crimes, such as murder, rape, and torture, which often go unreported or unpunished. According to a report by Trans Action Pakistan, a local advocacy group, at least 73 khwajasiras were killed and 382 were assaulted in the country between 2015 and 2020⁵.
- **Social exclusion and marginalization:** Khwajasiras face discrimination and stigma in accessing education, employment, health care, and housing. They are often forced to drop out of school, denied jobs, evicted from their homes, and refused medical treatment. Many khwajasiras resort to begging, dancing, or sex work as their only sources of income, which exposes them to further exploitation and violence.
- **Mental health issues:** Khwajasiras suffer from high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts, due to the constant fear, rejection, and isolation they

experience. They also face barriers to accessing mental health services, such as a lack of awareness, affordability, and sensitivity among health professionals.

In other cultural contexts, transgender people also face similar forms of transphobia, although the degree and nature of the challenges may vary depending on social, legal, and religious factors. For example, in Hong Kong, transgender people are denied legal recognition and protection, unless they undergo sex reassignment surgery, which is costly, invasive, and irreversible. This requirement violates the human rights and dignity of transgender people, who may not wish to undergo such a procedure or may not be able to afford it (Erni, 2013). In the United States, transgender people are often targets of hate crimes, especially transgender women of colour, who face multiple forms of oppression based on their race, gender, and sexuality. According to the Human Rights Campaign, at least 44 transgender or gender non-conforming people were fatally shot or killed by other violent means in 2020, the majority of whom were Black and Latinx transgender women (Norton, 1997).

Transphobia is a complex and pervasive phenomenon that affects the lives and well-being of transgender people across the world. It is rooted in the cultural and ideological assumptions that reinforce the binary and hierarchical system of gender and sexuality, and that devalues and erases the diversity and fluidity of human expression. To challenge transphobia, it is necessary to raise awareness and education about transgender issues, promote legal and policy reforms that protect the rights and dignity of transgender people, provide support and services that address the needs and challenges of transgender people, and foster a culture of respect and inclusion that celebrates the diversity and humanity of transgender people.

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY, AND HOW DOES IT APPLY TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Social Learning Theory is a psychological theory that explains how people learn from others. It was first proposed by Albert Bandura in the 1960s, who believed that people learn through observation, imitation, and modelling (Cherry, 2022). According to Bandura, learning occurs through the interaction of environmental and cognitive factors, such as attention, motivation, attitudes, and emotions. Social Learning Theory accounts for both the acquisition and the maintenance of behaviour, and also for the possibility of behaviour change.

One of the key concepts of Social Learning Theory is observational learning, which is the process of learning by watching the actions and outcomes of others (Mcleod, 2023). Bandura proposed that observational learning involves four stages: attention, retention, reproduction, and reinforcement. Attention refers to the extent to which the learner pays attention to the model's behaviour and its consequences. Retention refers to the extent to which the learner remembers the behaviour and can recall it later. Reproduction refers to the extent to which the learner can perform the behaviour accurately and consistently. Reinforcement refers to the extent to which the learner receives positive or negative feedback for the behaviour, which affects the likelihood of repeating it in the future.

Another key concept of Social Learning Theory is self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's ability to perform a certain task or achieve a certain goal. Bandura argued that self-efficacy influences learning and behaviour in various ways, such as affecting the choice of activities, the level of effort, persistence, and coping strategies. Self-efficacy can be enhanced by four sources of information: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional

arousal. Mastery experiences are the most powerful source of self-efficacy, as they involve the direct and successful performance of a task. Vicarious experiences are the second most powerful source of self-efficacy, as they involve observing others perform a task successfully. Verbal persuasion is the third most powerful source of self-efficacy, as it involves receiving positive feedback or encouragement from others. Emotional arousal is the least powerful source of self-efficacy, as it involves the physiological and emotional reactions to a task, such as anxiety or excitement.

Social Learning Theory has been applied to various fields and domains, such as education, health, criminology, and social innovation. For example, in education, Social Learning Theory can help explain how students learn from teachers, peers, and media, and how they can develop self-regulation, motivation, and academic achievement. In health, Social Learning Theory can help explain how people adopt healthy or unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking, drinking, or exercising, and how they can change them through interventions, such as social support, role models, or incentives. In criminology, Social Learning Theory can help explain how people learn to engage in criminal or deviant behaviour, such as violence, theft, or drug use, and how they can be deterred or rehabilitated through sanctions, rewards, or treatment. In social innovation, Social Learning Theory can help explain how people learn to create and implement new solutions to social problems, such as poverty, inequality, or climate change, and how they can be supported or challenged by social influences and processes, such as collaboration, feedback, or experimentation (Nilsson, 2023).

In conclusion, Social Learning Theory is a comprehensive and influential theory that describes how people learn from others and how they can change their behaviour. It highlights the role of

environmental and cognitive factors, such as observation, imitation, modelling, self-efficacy, and reinforcement, in the learning process. It also provides a framework for understanding and addressing various issues and challenges in different fields and domains, such as education, health, criminology, and social innovation.

APPLYING SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY TO UNDERSTAND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE:

Social learning theory is a psychological perspective that explains human behaviour as a result of the interaction between individual and environmental factors. According to this theory, people learn new behaviours by observing and imitating others, as well as by experiencing the consequences of their actions. Social learning theory also emphasizes the role of cognitive processes, such as beliefs, expectations, and self-efficacy, in influencing behaviour (Bowman & Bryant, 2011).

Social learning theory has been applied to understand various forms of violence, including transphobic violence, which is defined as any act of aggression, discrimination, or hostility against transgender people or those who do not conform to the gender norms of their society. Transphobic violence can take many forms, such as physical assault, sexual abuse, verbal harassment, bullying, hate crimes, intimate partner violence, and family rejection (UNESCO, n.d.).

One of the main assumptions of social learning theory is that violence is learned through observation and modelling of others, especially significant others, such as parents, peers, teachers, and media figures. Therefore, transphobic violence can be seen as a product of socialization, in which individuals are exposed to and internalize the dominant norms and values

of their culture, which often promote a binary and hierarchical view of gender and sexuality, and stigmatize and marginalize those who deviate from it. For example, a study found that homophobic aggression among adolescents was associated with observing peer homophobic teasing, parental verbal abuse, and exposure to homophobic media (Prati, 2012).

Another assumption of social learning theory is that violence is influenced by the reinforcement and punishment of behaviour, both directly and vicariously. Therefore, transphobic violence can be seen as a function of the rewards and costs that individuals perceive or expect from their actions, which can be material, social, or psychological. For example, a study found that male-to-female transgender women who engaged in sex work were more likely to experience violence from their clients, who were motivated by the desire to assert their masculinity, avoid being labelled as gay, and avoid paying for the service (Harley & Teaster, 2016).

A third assumption of social learning theory is that violence is mediated by cognitive processes, such as beliefs, expectations, and self-efficacy, which shape how individuals interpret and respond to their situations. Therefore, transphobic violence can be seen as a reflection of the cognitive schemas and scripts that individuals hold about gender and sexuality, and their ability and willingness to act on them. For example, a study by Lombardi et al. (2001) found that transgender people who experienced violence were more likely to have lower self-esteem, higher depression, and higher suicidal ideation, compared to those who did not experience violence (Shank, 2021).

Social learning theory provides a useful framework for understanding and preventing transphobic violence, by highlighting the role of social and environmental factors, as well as

individual and cognitive factors, in shaping behaviour. Some of the implications of this theory for intervention are:

- Raising awareness and education about transgender issues and challenging the stereotypes and myths that fuel transphobia and violence.
- Promoting legal and policy reforms that protect the rights and dignity of transgender people and ensure their access to justice and services.
- Providing support and counselling to transgender people who experience violence, and addressing their mental health and well-being needs.
- Fostering a culture of respect and inclusion that celebrates the diversity and humanity of transgender people and empowers them to express their identity and potential.

GAPS IN EXISTING RESEARCH

Despite the growing body of literature on transphobic violence, there are significant gaps in our understanding of this phenomenon in Pakistan and beyond. First, many research studies merely report on violent incidents but fail to offer explanations or theories on the perpetuation and occurrence of violence against transgender women in Pakistan. The lack of theorization hinders our understanding of the factors that drive transphobic violence and the possible interventions that could help prevent such incidents.

Second, most research on transphobic violence is Eurocentric, which means it does not account for the unique social, cultural, and political contexts of non-Western societies. Pakistan, for instance, is a post-colonial state with a long history of colonial transphobia, followed by modern transphobia in contemporary times. Therefore, research that does not consider the nuances of

transphobic violence in a post-colonial South Asian state may not offer a complete understanding of the issue.

Third, there is a dearth of research on violent masculinities and urban masculinity in the context of transphobic violence in contemporary times. While gender-based violence is often attributed to patriarchal values, how these values manifest in urban settings and the context of transgender women in Pakistan require further investigation. Addressing the gaps in our knowledge can help identify the root causes of transphobic violence and develop appropriate interventions that can effectively address the issue.

III. METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH STRATEGY

For this qualitative study, we used methods rooted in holistic, context-specific, and reflexive thinking. There were three main investigators in this study: Dr Mehrub Awan as the principal investigator and Hina Baloch and Shahzadi Rai as the co-investigators. Additionally, we had five key informants representing perspectives of the khwajasira community from the dancing groups and Pashtun ethnicities. The investigator groups were our “outside” and “inside” lenses, respectively. Collectively, the investigators are fluent in the indigenous Hijra Farsi language, and the outside lens was fluent in 6 local languages of Pakistan, including Pashto, Urdu, and Sindhi. The initial site of our study was Sea View, Karachi, and the fieldwork was conducted from mid-July to mid-September over 8 weeks. However, later during data analysis, we found that patterns observed at Sea View Karachi were grossly like many other incidents reported elsewhere. The objects of our observation and interaction on the field were queer people, beelas, others, and the artefacts in the environment. The inside lens deliberately interacted with the queer subjects, as per queer norms, to converse and have organic unstructured conversations. The outside lens interacted with and observed the beelas organically, as per masculine and beela conventions, to decipher homosocial signalling (if any) that enabled them to identify and pursue queer bodies. All investigators took notes of their field visits. At three to six points in the study, the investigators had a private dialogue-based discussion on their observations, thoughts, and feelings at the principal investigator’s home or office. These discussions were audio-recorded to be later coded and explicated using MAXQDA. Off-site conversations of the investigators with other queer and non-queer people added a small, but necessary, third component to our data. Our findings were, hence, triangulated between these three data sources: investigator notes, coded

transcripts of discussions and interviews, and notes from off-site conversations. Inspired by naturalistic, and emergent, methods, if we encountered a queer person who was information-rich and could add value to our discussion, they were invited over for an informal conversation. With this, we hoped that A) we would shift the spotlight off the survivor and onto the aggressor, and B) embolden political discourse from indigenous gender-sexuality regimes. Extant literature on queer studies was limited in Pakistan and was seldom infused with indigenous queer perspectives. This research aimed to open new avenues for emergent South Asian queer narratives, while simultaneously broadening the praxis (and possibilities) of queering empirical methods in the social sciences.

ANALYTICAL STRATEGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study focuses on exploring the complex interplay of various factors that contribute to transphobic violence in Pakistan, with a specific emphasis on beela violence. To achieve this aim, we used a qualitative analytical strategy that involves iterative coding, the application of a meta-theory, and an abductive approach.

As already discussed, we collected data through in-depth interviews with transgender individuals in Karachi, as well as through focus group discussions and ethnographic observation. We also analysed secondary sources, such as news reports and academic literature, to gain a comprehensive understanding of transphobic violence in Pakistan.

The data were analysed through an iterative coding process, which involved initially coding for mentions of race, geography, and group violence. We then recoded the data for mentions of beela violence and overlaid the text with mentions of beelas alongside the texts that mentioned race,

geography, and/or group violence. Through this exercise, we identified the complex interplay of all these factors in transphobic violence.

To add more nuance to our findings, we searched for global literature that theorizes gender-based violence and can be applied to our specific Pakistani context. After a thorough review, we agreed upon Social Learning Theory as it corresponded the most with our direct observations and deductive reasoning. We used this theory to theorize how beela violence in Pakistan is socially reproduced.

To maintain generalizability, we ignored very specific Karachi data such as what neighbourhoods are controlled by what beela gangs. Instead, we focused on data that identified common patterns of transphobic violence across the city of Karachi, and beyond in Pakistan.

Through an iterative analytical exercise, we identified beela violence as a distinct form of violent masculine sexuality specific to Pakistan. We used Social Learning Theory as an inductive framework to describe transphobic violence in Pakistan. Furthermore, we defined beela violence as a distinct form of violent masculine sexuality specific to Pakistan.

Our analytical approach can be classified as abductive, as it involved a simultaneous inductive process leading to the adoption of a meta-theory to explain this violence and a deductive approach to define and organize a definition of beela violence for further generalizable application. This study contributes to the understanding of transphobic violence in Pakistan and can inform the development of interventions to address this issue.

DISSEMINATION PLANS:

We are very keen to publish our work in two journals specifically: *Sexualities*, and//or the *Transgender Studies Quarterly*. We are aware of how queer knowledge gets locked away in academic journals with inaccessible language for many, especially those who are not fluent in English. Therefore, we also aim to translate and extrapolate our work into Urdu and disseminate it among all queer organizations in Pakistan, especially among queer political leaders and allies.

IV. FINDINGS

Two major themes emerged from our data, as we grouped the categories into sub-themes and organized them. We describe the incidents using a phenomenological approach in this section. In the next section of the discussion, we use inductive reasoning to explain this specific transphobic violence using the Social Learning Theory. Thus, our themes are not blanket findings but rather an organization of phenomenological events into firstly, an organization of the reported violent transphobic masculinity into a distinct sexuality called *beelayi*, and secondly to describe the racial, class, economic, geographic, urban, and gendered contours of *beelayi*. We then utilize Social Learning Theory to further organize the manifestation of *beelayi* to describe the causation and perpetuation of transphobic violence in the Pakistani urban gender ecosystem.

In summary, we are presenting “*beelayi*” as a uniquely Pakistani form of violent masculinity. This term comes from the native khwajasira secret language known as the Hijra Farsi or Farsi Chaand. Centring our findings in a native queer vernacular is essential to de-centre our discourse from Eurocentric models of gender-based violence. It also grounds our findings in a localized setting, where many layers of historic and colonial oppression intersect with ongoing class and urban violence to give birth to a unique model of violent masculinity.

THEME 1: THE VIOLENCE-PLEASURE PARADOX: DEFINING *BEELAYI* AS A DISTINCT FORM OF MALE HETEROSEXUALITY

Queer cruising is a specific activity for people who identify as queer and trans. In our ethnographic visits as queer researchers, we could identify queer people through their expressive femininity, style, and gender non-conformity to masculine standards. We also only observed assigned male at birth (AMAB) queer people who would be categorized as effeminate men,

trans-feminine, transgender, and khwajasira people on the beach. Their trans-feminine and gender non-conforming characteristics make them a visual target, both for positive cruising and extractive sexual harassment. We describe acts of positive cruising as affirmative socio-sexual and intimate behaviours where two or more queer individuals identify each other as queer, strike up a conversation, and develop a positive non-violent relationship in that particular moment regardless of whether the interaction ends in sexual engagement or not. All other forms of engagement are usually violent and extractive. These involve objectifying the queer body and demanding sexual or intimate favours from the person such as forcing them to give their phone number, groping and physically harassing them, chasing them, and in the most extreme case raping them.

We conclude that the two different forms of engagement emerge from two different ways of engaging with public queerness. The former is positive as it is affirmative and comforting for both individuals, even in a publicly heteronormative setting. The latter is dehumanizing and assertive, where the masculine form takes charge of the queer form and demands sexual pleasure from it. This is a form of male hegemony on queer bodies but for simultaneous sexual and violent reasons. We argue that violence is integral to this expression of sexual interest, as is contrasted with the former mindset and cruising approach. This form derives pleasure not merely through sexual and intimate means, but through active violence. Violence and other quasi-sexual acts are therefore, in praxis, the same in this expression of sexuality. We use the Hijra Farsi word “*beelayi*” to describe this phenomenon where “*beelayi*” is the verb and “*beela*” is the subject of this verb.

We define beelayi, thus, as a form of violent sexual interest of cisgender men in khwajasira persons, trans-feminine people, and effeminate men where masculine hegemony is actively exercised on the queer person and sexual and intimate favours extracted from them under duress.

The person who enacts this violent sexuality is the beela. Such an understanding is common knowledge among all khwajasira and aligned people in Pakistan. We clarify this to assert that we aren't creating a definition anew; we're merely presenting indigenous khwajasira wisdom and knowledge of the perpetration of violence upon them in the English academic vernacular. The mere fact that a term exists for this in the native khwajasira language confirms that this violence is repetitive and significant of a deep-seated sexual-social value in the Pakistani culture that the mainstream culture refuses to address and acknowledge. Here, a subversive queer culture has had to invent its own language to describe the common violence upon it.

Beelayi isn't a phenomenon only enacted in a public and leisure setting. It describes a mindset of cisgender men with an active interest in khwajasira and trans-feminine people which manifests as violent actions in different social settings. Public cruising and places of public leisure present a common setting where a trans person and a beela encounter one another. These encounters can be stated as chance encounters, however most trans and beela people expect to encounter one another in public places of leisure making this chance encounter between two individuals a predictable one. Thus, although the encounter between a trans individual and beelas would be one where the two parties are strangers to one another, the mechanics of this interaction are already well-established. Two to three beelas approach a trans person and a conversation ensues. Suddenly, other bystanders begin joining in and start making a circle around the trans person. Soon, the trans person is virtually surrounded by a group of strangers in this public setting. They usually demand the trans person to dance for them, in the mildest form of extraction. They can

also start groping her in the group, and the commonest assault is sticking a finger up to the buttocks of the trans person. This act has been narrated by all queer and trans people who frequent public spaces. After extracting pleasure through group violence on the trans person, the group begins to dissipate and leave the public place. Some remain and loiter around for an hour before they approach someone else.

Sometimes, trans people are dancing on their own with their friends or join a group dance already happening by cisgender men in a moment of sharing public joy. Even such a non-harmful and consensual addition of a trans person in a cis-male space results in the same process as described earlier. That is, a group begins to gather around the transgender persons and physical harassment starts momentarily afterwards. This entire episode of a crowd collecting and extracting sexual pleasures out of a visibly distressed and traumatized queer and trans-effeminate person takes no longer than five to seven minutes. It is a quick, effective, and brutal form of public sexual assault.

This specific form of violence isn't exclusive to Sea View. It also happens in specific settings where khwajasira and trans-feminine people are commissioned to dance at private events for an all-male audience. Alcohol and drug use are commonly part of such all-male celebrations, and khwajasiras are attacked by the guests at many such events. This is documented in many documentaries, news stories, digital media, and now films; in short, it is common knowledge that khwajasiras are routinely harassed at dance events. The practice of encircling a khwajasira person by a group of men, that then proceeds to finger, grope and violate the person is common even in this setting. This is also termed as beelayi by the khwajasira community.

In two distinctly different settings with very different contours of performativity and socialization, we see that the form of violence is common and has a common word in the khwajasira language: beelayi. We thus conclude with authority that beelayi is a distinct form of Pakistani sexuality, and possibly South-Asian, and in one of its manifestations a group of men surround a khwajasira person in a public place of leisure, or a private place, to violently extract pleasure from her.

As we elaborate in the next theme, there are obvious racial-ethnic contours to describe organized beela violence in the form of gangs. Public beelayi, however, isn't always racially determined. This means that we can't implicate one particular race, especially Pashtuns, in public beelayi. This distinction is important as the Pashtun race is heavily implicated, as per qualitative data from khwajasira participants, in organized gang violence. However, all khwajasira participants confirmed that beelayi in places across Karachi can be instigated by any racial group and often contains a mixed-racial crowd. Such a demarcation is important because racial profiling is an ugly reality of urban policing in Pakistan, and as such we consider it our responsibility to report racially themed data accurately. As researchers, we do not believe that ethnically profiling Pashtun groups in a public setting in Karachi as a measure to control transphobic violence is the solution, nor do we want our reporting on racial contours of transphobia to add to more targeted urban policing. Instead, as we will elaborate further in the discussion section, we believe in rehabilitative reform through positive social learning, and by halting the progression of transphobic social learning in specific racial groups.

THEME 2: URBAN GEOGRAPHIES OF GENDER VIOLENCE: BEELA VIOLENCE AS GANG VIOLENCE TO ENSLAVE KHWAJASIRA BODIES FOR MASCULINE POSTURING

In stark contrast to the ephemeral, quick, and dispersive nature of beela violence in public settings, beela violence as organized gang violence and intimate partner violence is much more structurally organized. To first understand it, we must unpack the performance economy of khwajasira dancers in Karachi specifically, and across Pakistan generally.

Despite the globally projected and perceived conservative image of Pakistan, all-male celebrations are a common occurrence across the country, and especially among the non-elite non-bourgeoisie social strata. Such celebrations happen on weddings as a bachelor's night, as a "party" where friends are invited to gather and "have fun" especially if one of the friends has returned from "abroad". In some ways, it is a way of expressing a form of "liberalism" among the non-bourgeoisie, and khwajasira mujra dancers and performers are an integral part of such events. Mehak Malik, a popular khwajasira dancer in Punjab, has over 13 million followers on TikTok, and amasses views in hundreds of millions for her "mujra" videos. Mujra is an indigenous dance form which in the pre-colonial times denoted an evocative dance by a courtesan, but now ubiquitously means a sexualized vulgar dance form on Punjabi or Pashto songs. In Karachi, such dances also happen on the latest or trending Bollywood item numbers. Across geography and urban class, the aesthetics of this trans-performativity change, but the gender dynamics and norms remain the same. The khwajasira dancers are in a position of weakness and perpetual perceived threat of violence from either the guests, the organizers, or an opposing gang to the organizers.

As is the case with urban violence, we can't historically pinpoint when this affect emerged in the contemporary urban temporality of Karachi city. We can however describe the phenomenology of this occurrence. As is narrated by khwajasira informants, events are mostly organized by beelas and khwajasira dancers commissioned to dance there. Beelas, here, means an organized group of men from a select neighbourhood in Karachi, who expresses a violent interest in khwajasira and transfeminine people. Beelas usually have oppositional gangs, with whom they contest mainly over khwajasira bodies' ownership but also on other gang-related petty fights related to economies of crime such as the illicit drug trade. As is common among gangs globally, masculine posturing is a major determinant in a gang-member's worth. Among beelas, a beela's control over his transgender "object" is what socially manifests as masculine posturing. Therefore, the beelas exert immense hegemony on one transgender woman to demonstrate that their "woman is in control". This also, interestingly, counts as a "relationship". Such a relationship means that the khwajasira person "belongs" to the beela and hence all beelas associated with this one beela will respect her by not harming her. In return this beela will also protect her from violence from other beela gangs. Consequently, the khwajasira person performs only when and where the beela allows her to perform hence significantly curtailing and policing her income, while also forcing her into a co-dependent relationship of violence prevention. If a khwajasira refuses, walks out, or cheats during this relationship, the beela will attack events where she is performing, almost always sexually abusing and maiming her in the process.

This is a brilliantly dystopic system of khwajasira abuse where in the name of intimate partnerships, khwajasiras are practically enslaved to a beela within the beela system. Through this, the khwajasira person is perpetually exposed to beela violence and hence in perpetual need of protection from the beela violence – hence forcing her into a co-dependent relationship with

the beela. In Peshawar, beelas make the khwajasira person sign notarized stamp papers stating that she belongs to the signatory beela and that she won't travel, perform, or meet someone without his permission. If she disobeys the code of conduct, she is penalized through extreme violence and shaving of her head. There is a word for these stamp papers used among both khwajasira and beelas simultaneously: *maanrk*.

The violence enacted on khwajasiras goes beyond what is commonly described in gender-based violence on cisgender women. This violence is dramatic, superfluous, and recorded and displayed across social media and among WhatsApp groups by beelas openly to send a message of domination to other khwajasiras in the city. In what follows we will describe these acts and hence pose this sentence as a trigger warning. These acts include forcing a khwajasira person to push a glass bottle in her rectum till it breaks; tying her up to the roof naked for many hours in the scorching sun till she passes out; forcing her to drink urine and/or eat faeces; stripping her naked and beating her senseless; gang-raping her; throwing acid on her face; and almost always shaving her head.

The beelas are all organized as gangs, and almost always led by a Pashtun man who has workers of all ethnicities. Although there are obvious racial contours to the make-up of beela leadership, our presentation of the issue in this report is more a narration of perceived racial realities by khwajasira informants. Where we value the knowledge contributed to add to the body of emerging work on transgender violence in Pakistan, we encourage readers of the study to refrain from generalizing ethnic or racial biases in the light of these findings. We specifically included Pashtun khwajasira informants to guide our discussion on the intersection of Pashtun ethnicity and transphobic violence.

We hypothesized that if traditional Pashtun values are heteronormative and hence look down upon transness, Pashtun transwomen will be more at risk of violence by beela gangs. This hypothesis could also be true because low-income neighbourhoods in Karachi are ethnically divided and ghettoized. This posits that beelas are powerful in Pashtun-majority areas, that also house Pashtun transwomen by design. As is narrated by our informants, Pashtun transwomen are seen as a blight on the Pashtun culture by the beelas – who as beelas despite having an active sexual interest in them also want to violate them as part of their fused violence-pleasure beela complex as well as penalizing them for defying the Pashtun code of patriarchy. This creates a trifecta of violence on Pashtun transwomen and presents a valid and poignant theory to explain the high rate of violence on transwomen in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Pashtun majority areas of Mardan and Peshawar.

Furthermore, Pashtun culture isn't a monolith and Pashtun folks are further organized into indigenous and geographic tribes. The four "areas" or "places of original belonging" for Pashtun settlers in Karachi heavily implicated in beela violence are Mohmand Agency, Peshawar, Mardan, and Afghanistan – Afghans being refugees and non-Pakistanis are the weakest form of beela groups. As is evident from all recent news reports, Mardan and Peshawar are the hubs of transphobic violence in Pakistan with the highest number of reported violent attacks and murders of khwajasiras, almost all of them dancers and performers. We thus posit that the implication of Peshawari and Mardani groups in Karachi in beela violence isn't a mere coincidence with the highest transphobic violent attacks in Peshawar and Mardan actually. We believe this is a cross-cutting issue and adds further nuance by complicating the category of "Pashtun". For instance, Pashtun transwomen repeatedly said that Swati Pashtun groups aren't implicated in beela violence and considered peaceful people. This demarcation and complication are important to

prevent a racially generalized policing of all people from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and to point out the granularities of transphobic organizing within racial minorities.

These gangs are, according to khwajasira informants, also linked with the business of selling hashish or *charrs* and are intimately linked with the khwajasira performance economy. Gangs belong to “areas” or “neighbourhoods” and hence there is an element of turf control too. So, if an event is being organized in a certain area, the biggest beela of that area will mostly be present at that event. At these events, money is thrown over khwajasira performers and that results in perceived ownership over the khwajasira. This may prompt jealous fights at the event between men or result in a direct coercion of the khwajasira person by the one throwing the money. Groping and touching is the commonest sexual favour enacted on the khwajasira person without her consent, and if the person is a beela with perceived power the khwajasira dancer must comply often to avoid violence. This also creates another layer of masculine posturing where a beela’s masculinity is socially validated by the popular, prettier dancers, known as *maashooq* in Hijra Farsi (translated to beloved or desirable), dancing for him publicly and taking money from him. If a khwajasira refuses, the beela may create havoc, do aerial firing, kidnap her, maim her with bullets in the legs so she can’t dance anymore, and worst of all, rape her. This is the social display of absolute masculine fiefdom over performing trans bodies in Karachi, and beyond, through enactment of immense acts of violence publicly, or the public display of private acts of violence through digital media. The currency here is extreme violence, and the bargain is violent masculine hegemony that further entrenches masculinity for an already violent gang-leader or local petty criminal.

The derivation of masculine power through gang violence in ghettoized neighbourhoods is already well-established across literature from Pakistan to the United States of America, and we won't comment upon it in this paper. Instead, as researchers we conclude that the absolute extremity of this violence once again confirms our definition of beelayi, where violence is an integral part of deriving sexual pleasure out of the khwajasira person's body. Gender-based violence against khwajasiras, or transgender women in Pakistan, is unique due to their status as both masculine and feminine simultaneously. This duality makes the contours of violence against them remarkably different from violence against cisgender women. Khwajasiras are seen as less masculine than men but more masculine than women, and more feminine than cisgender women. As a result, violence against khwajasiras is often seen as more rewarding, as it involves the decimation of someone who is perceived to be more powerful than a woman in terms of masculinity, while also being womanlier than a woman in terms of gender expression.

Moreover, anal sex adds another layer to the power dynamic in gender-based violence against khwajasiras. Anal rape is considered to be more empowering, and the use of this rhetoric is common in Pakistani vernacular. The phrase "I will f*ck you in the a*se" are frequently used as a slur to demonstrate one's dominion over another. This rhetoric is indicative of the complex gender dynamics at play in violence against khwajasiras.

In conclusion, the gender-based violence against khwajasiras in Pakistan is unique due to the dualistic perception of their gender identity, which creates a new playground for violence. The use of anal rape as a tool to demonstrate power and control further illustrates the complex power dynamics at play. It is crucial to understand these dynamics to address the violence and

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discrimination faced by khwajasiras in Pakistan and to work towards creating a more equitable and just society for all

V. DISCUSSION

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY – TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND ORGANIZED TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN PAKISTAN

We have elaborated upon Social Learning Theory in detail in the literature review section. Here we present a brief overview of the theory and how it is applied to understanding intimate partner violence. We will then apply the theory to our findings to unpack and ascertain how beela violence is also learnt socially in both public and intimate settings.

Social Learning Theory is a psychological framework that seeks to explain how individuals learn and adopt behaviours through observation and interaction with their social environment. This theory proposes that individuals are more likely to engage in behaviours that they have observed and learned from their environment. Social Learning Theory can be broken down into four stages: Attention, Retention, Reproduction, and Motivation.

The first stage of Social Learning Theory is Attention. This stage involves an individual paying attention to the behaviours of others in their social environment. Attention is crucial because without it, an individual will not be able to learn and adopt behaviours from others. The individual must be motivated and interested in the behaviours being observed. In the context of public beela violence, an individual may pay attention to abusive behaviours exhibited by other men on khwajasira and trans-feminine persons. Similarly, it is common for young boys to be in attendance alongside the older men of their family at events where khwajasira dance performers are present. Paying attention to violence on, and hegemonizing of, khwajasira bodies through the display of money and power is an important factor in starting the chain of Social Learning Theory in this context.

The second stage of Social Learning Theory is Retention. This stage involves an individual rehearsing and recalling the behaviours they have observed. The individual must retain the information they have observed and process it in a way that allows them to understand and recall the behaviours. This stage is important because without retention, the individual will not be able to reproduce the behaviours they have observed. In the context of beela violence, an individual may rehearse the abusive behaviours they have observed and recall it when they are in a similar situation.

The third stage of Social Learning Theory is Reproduction. This stage involves an individual practicing and receiving feedback on the behaviours they have observed. The individual must reproduce the behaviours in a way that is consistent with what they have observed. Feedback is important because it allows the individual to refine and improve their behaviours. In the context of beela violence, an individual may practice abusive behaviours and receive feedback from their partner through pushback and submission. Demonstrations of submission, humiliation and pain are evocations of submission from both men and women, hence denoting a sense of power and domination for the one observing these demonstrations. Feedback, here, is thus simultaneously observed and visceral.

The fourth and final stage of Social Learning Theory is Motivation. This stage involves an individual being rewarded and reinforced for the behaviours they have adopted. The individual must be motivated to continue engaging in the behaviours. Rewards can be positive or negative and can come from the individual or from others in their social environment. In the context of beela violence, an individual may be reinforced by the sense of power and control they feel when

engaging in abusive behaviour, or they may receive positive reinforcement from peers who encourage their behaviour by validating his masculine prowess. Similarly, in dance performance settings, young boys including minors are encouraged by their older peers and given bills of rupees to throw on dancers.

In conclusion, our application of Social Learning Theory proposes that beelas learn and adopt trans-violent behaviours through observation and interaction with their social environment. The theory can be broken down into four stages: Attention, Retention, Reproduction, and Motivation. These stages outline the process by which beelas learn and adopt masculine and sexual behaviours, especially abusive and violent behaviour towards khwajasira persons in an intimate partner setting.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS FOR UNDERSTANDING TRANSPHOBIA IN PAKISTAN

The findings of this research have several implications for understanding transphobia in Pakistan and for addressing this issue more broadly. First, the social learning theory can provide a framework to understand the factors that contribute to the perpetration of transphobic violence in Pakistan. By identifying the four stages of social learning theory - attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation - it is possible to recognize the different points at which interventions can be implemented to prevent the perpetration of transphobic violence.

Second, the research findings suggest that halting the production of violence at the reproduction stage and disincentivizing violence at the motivation stage can be a realistic goal for development and violence prevention interventions. This requires the criminalization of gender-based violence on khwajasira and transgender persons, and the penalization of such violence.

Such a move would have a deterrent effect on beelas and their supporters, who currently see transphobic violence as a form of masculinity.

Third, the existing social and legal systems in Pakistan have not been successful in addressing transphobic violence against khwajasira and transgender persons. This can be attributed to a lack of attention to this issue and the absence of police interventions and the failure of the criminal prosecution system. Therefore, there is a need for institutional and systemic changes that create a more supportive environment for the transgender community and penalize those who perpetrate violence against them.

TOWARDS REFORMATIVE REHABILITATION – A MODEL FOR UNLEARNING VIOLENT AND TRANSPHOBIC MASCULINITIES

Addressing transphobic violence requires a multifaceted approach that not only focuses on punishing perpetrators of violence but also aims to rehabilitate them. For those who have committed beela violence or any other form of transphobic violence for the first time, rehabilitative programs can be designed to address their social learning of transphobic violence. These programs can help them understand the root causes of their behaviour, the impact of their actions on the community, and how to develop empathy towards transgender individuals. The goal should be to re-educate these individuals and help them to unlearn toxic beliefs and behaviours that promote transphobia.

Moreover, rehabilitative programs should also address the experiences of those who have grown up in tough urban neighbourhoods, where transphobia is often normalized. Such individuals have likely been exposed to and witnessed different forms of violence, and therefore may require specialized care to heal from the trauma they have experienced. Rehabilitation programs can

provide a safe space for individuals to share their experiences, process their emotions, and develop healthy coping mechanisms.

In addition to addressing the root causes of transphobic violence, rehabilitative programs should also focus on unlearning patterns of thinking that justify and perpetuate hegemonizing a trans person for sexual or extractive pleasures. This involves developing an understanding of the harmful impact of such beliefs on individuals and the wider community and replacing them with positive and respectful attitudes towards transgender individuals. Through this process, offenders can begin to internalize healthy attitudes and behaviours towards the transgender community and contribute to ending transphobic violence in their communities.

In conclusion, addressing transphobic violence requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond punishment and focuses on rehabilitation. Rehabilitative programs that address social learning of transphobic violence, healing from trauma, and unlearning toxic beliefs and behaviours can be effective in curbing transphobic violence in Pakistan and beyond.

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the need for a multi-faceted approach to address transphobic violence in Pakistan. This requires interventions that focus on the different stages of social learning theory, as well as institutional and systemic changes that provide support for the transgender community and penalize those who perpetrate violence against them. Only through such a comprehensive approach can we hope to prevent and reduce transphobic violence in Pakistan and beyond.

IDENTIFICATION OF GAPS AND LIMITATIONS IN CURRENT RESEARCH

The current study on violence against khwajasiras in Pakistan has several limitations. Firstly, there was no mapping of the judicial and criminal system in addressing transphobic violence.

This is a significant limitation as understanding the role of the justice system is crucial in assessing the level of protection and justice provided to khwajasiras. Therefore, the study lacks insight into the institutional and legal framework that is supposed to prevent and punish transphobic violence.

Secondly, the study only included the responses of the aggrieved persons, i.e., khwajasira and transgender people, and did not include the responses of aggravators or perpetrators of violence i.e., the beelas. This limitation prevents us from understanding the motivations and justifications for transphobic violence, which could have significant implications for policy and intervention strategies.

Thirdly, the study was limited to Karachi, although the data suggests that similar cultures exist elsewhere in Pakistan. However, issues of generalizability are not a significant concern as the informants have lived in other parts of Pakistan and reported similarities in the patterns of organized violence. Moreover, as the khwajasira community is tightly linked with each other, information flows, especially on organized violence, can be used to draft conclusions about the country at large.

In conclusion, the current study on violence against khwajasiras in Pakistan has several limitations that need to be addressed in future research. These limitations include the lack of mapping of the judicial and criminal system, the exclusion of responses of aggravators or perpetrators of violence, and the limited geographic scope of the study. Addressing these limitations could provide a more comprehensive understanding of transphobic violence in Pakistan and inform policies and interventions to prevent it.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research report has presented the concept of beelayi as a uniquely Pakistani form of violent masculinity. We have defined beelayi as a violent sexual interest of cisgender men in khwajasira persons, trans-feminine people, and effeminate men where masculine hegemony is actively exercised on the queer person, and sexual and intimate favours extracted from them under duress. The report has also highlighted the manifestation of beela violence as organized gang violence in Karachi where khwajasira dancers are enslaved by beelas in co-dependent relationships.

The study has shown that violence is enacted on the khwajasira person if she breaks the code of conduct of the relationship. This is a violent hegemony over trans bodies that contributes to increasing the masculine value of the beela in his gang through masculine posturing. Khwajasiras are trapped in a gang-economy of crime and intimidation. This highlights the urgent need for interventions that address the socialization of young men into transphobic violence and challenge violent masculinities.

Furthermore, we have discussed the importance of criminalizing transphobic violence and improving the police and criminal justice system to penalize and then rehabilitate offenders. The report highlights the need for rehabilitative programs that address a person's social learning of transphobic violence, healing from violence they've experienced and observed growing up in tough urban neighbourhoods, and unlearning patterns of thinking that justify hegemonizing a trans person for sexual or extractive pleasures.

Finally, we recommend that future research focuses on piloting violence reduction interventions and challenging violent masculinities. It is essential to develop a more nuanced understanding of

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transphobic violence in Pakistan and beyond and to develop effective interventions that can reduce violence against trans individuals.

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