

**PERCEPTION OF YOUTH ON SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF LGBTIQ  
COMMUNITY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF ISLAMABAD,  
PAKISTAN.**



**Submitted By:**

**Aiman Nisar**

**MS Applied Anthropology**

**Enrollment no: 01-251221-001**

**Supervised by:**

**Dr. Asim Muneeb Khan**

**Assistant Professor**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**BAHRIA UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD CAMPUS**

**JANUARY, 2024**

**Perception of Youth on Social Acceptance of LGBTIQ Community: An  
Anthropological Study of Islamabad, Pakistan.**



**Researcher**

**Aiman Nisar**

**01-251221-001**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
MS Applied Anthropology at the department of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Bahria University Islamabad.

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**BAHRIA UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD CAMPUS**

**2024**

## THESIS COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

Scholar's Name: Aiman Nisar

Registration No: 55240

Program of Study: MS Applied Anthropology

Thesis Title: Perception of Youth on Social Acceptance of LGBTIQ Community: An Anthropological Study of Islamabad, Pakistan.

It is to certify that the above scholar's thesis has been completed to my satisfaction and, to my belief, its standard is appropriate for submission for examination. I have also conducted a plagiarism test of this thesis using HEC-prescribed software and found a similarity index of 9% which is the permissible limit set by the HEC for the MS/PhD degree thesis. I have also found the thesis in a format recognized by the BU for the MS thesis.

Principal Supervisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **COPYRIGHT PAGE**

- 1.** The author of this thesis (including any appendices and /or schedules to this thesis) owns any copyright in it and he has given Bahria University, Islamabad the right to use such Copyright for any administrative, promotional, educational, and/or teaching purposes.
- 2.** Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts, may be made only in accordance with the regulations of the Bahria University Library. Details of these regulations may be obtained from the Librarian. This page must form part of any such copies made.
- 3.** The ownership of any patents, designs, trademarks, and any and all other intellectual property rights except for the Copyright (the Intellectual Property Rights) and any reproductions of copyright works, for example, graphs and tables (Reproductions), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by the third parties. Such Intellectual Property Rights and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property Rights and /or Reproductions.
- 4.** Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication, and exploitation of this thesis, the Copyright, and any Intellectual Property Rights and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available from the Head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad.

## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY**

This is to certify that the intellectual contents of the thesis Witness protection & Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Case Study of Pakistan are the product of my own research work except, as cited property and accurately in the acknowledgments and references, the material is taken from such sources as research journals, books, internet, etc. solely to support, elaborate, compare, and extend the earlier work. Further, this work has not been submitted by me previously for any degree, nor it shall be submitted by me in the future for obtaining any degree from this University, or any other University or institution. The incorrectness of the information, if proved at any stage, shall authorize the university to cancel my degree.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Research Student: Aiman Nisar

## **DEDICATION**

With heartfelt gratitude, I dedicate my MS thesis to my beloved parents for their unwavering support, love, and encouragement throughout this challenging journey.

I am always grateful for the sacrifices they have made, not only the financial support but emotional support as well in helping me accomplish my aspirations.

Thank you for being my pillars of strength.

## **ABSTRACT**

The emergence of the LGBTIQ community has been a topic of discussion and contention for years due to the community's ideology against the cultural, religious, and moral values of Pakistan. The acceptability of third gender as well as other diverse gender identities has been objectionable therefore, this study's primary interest is to discern and scrutinize how the LGBTIQ community is perceived, overtly discussed, and covertly categorized by individuals in Religious and Culturally sensitive countries like Pakistan. Moreover, this study explored the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of respondents affecting their viewpoint regarding the social inclusion of this community in Pakistan. A sample of 20 participants consisting of educated individuals aged between 20 to 27 years old from two different universities in Islamabad was obtained through the Consecutive sampling technique. In-depth interviews were utilized to examine the in-depth knowledge, and deeper understanding of individuals and recorded responses were analyzed through a thematic analysis technique using Intersectionality theory as a major guideline. The findings of the study disclosed that the acceptability and unacceptability of the LGBTIQ community is controversial in its nature since the ideology of this community is violating the moralities of the Pakistani society therefore, respondents shared intolerable responses towards this community. Islam clearly mentions in Holy Quran that homosexuality, prostitution, nudity, and other diverse sexual orientations are forbidden and any person committing such crime must be liable to harsh punishment. Likewise, culture opposes having feelings for other genders, in this regard, the concept of Cultural Relativism emphasizes that Western societies have been welcoming the LGBTIQ community which empowers them as compared to Pakistan. Moreover, the introduction of the Transgender bill in 2018 highlighted the issue of misinterpretation of terminology transgender and intersex

which was also observed during data collection. It also underlined the argument for criminalization and decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community. Meanwhile, Social media and the Aurat March played significant roles in providing inclusion, liberty, and freedom of speech in contrast, mainstream media restricts the content that violates religious or cultural values as the movie Joyland was criticized by the masses as the movie featured a married man falling in love with a transgender woman. The escalation of HIV was associated with non-heterosexual contact, which is a taboo in Pakistan, moreover, people associated the identity crises of this community with mental health issues. This study encompassed a detailed examination of young respondents embracing both inclusion and exclusion of the LGBTIQ community and at the same time, highlighted the challenges that occurred with the advent of this community.

**Key Words:**

**LGBTIQ, Youth, Criminalization, Decriminalization, Social Acceptance**



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

All praise to Allah Almighty, the most magnificent who granted his mercy upon us and guided us on the right path. First of all, I am thankful to the most gracious and divine power Almighty Allah, who has enlightened my mind with knowledge and understanding and blessed me with enough strength and health to conduct this research project. Durood and Salaam on Prophet Muhammad (SAW) whose life is a complete guide for human beings. Without His great help and Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) guidance, I wouldn't be able to complete my goal.

I would like to thank and regard my respected supervisor Dr. Asim Muneeb Khan, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University Islamabad. His expertise, knowledge, counseling, guidance, and encouragement have helped me in the completion of my thesis. It was impossible for me to complete it without his assistance. I would like to thank my department and the respected Head of the Department, Dr. Irfan Hasnain Qaisrani, for providing this opportunity and assistance.

I am always grateful to my parents who deserve the greatest appreciation for their immense support, love, and prayers which made it possible for me to complete my research work. I am forever indebted to my mother Farzana Nisar and my father Nisar Ahmed Khokhar for fulfilling my desired wishes and wanting me to acquire higher education and continuously supporting me, guiding me, and boosting my morale. Moreover, I would thank my siblings for their support, especially my elder sister who guided me during this whole process.

I am thankful to my other teachers for their academic and non-academic support, particularly Dr. Waheed Rana, Dr. Latafat, Ms. Sohima, Ms. Asia, and Dr. Majid. Moreover, I would like to thank Ex-HOD Dr. Umer Hayat for his huge support during his

tenure. I would like to thank my close friends who were really encouraging and supportive throughout this time, particularly Fariya, Guljana, and Warda for their moral support and care. Lastly, I would like to thank all the participants for their valuable time and participation, without them my research wouldn't have been accomplished.

**Aiman Nisar**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page No.
DEDICATION	5
ABSTRACT	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	8
LIST OF TABLES	13
LIST OF FIGURES	14
LIST OF ANNEXURES	15
ACRONYMS	16
GLOSSARY	18
CHAPTER ONE --- INTRODUCTION -----	19
1.1 Problem Statement	23
1.2 Research Objective	24
1.3 Research Questions	25
1.4 Significance of The Study	25
1.5 Operational Definition of Major Terms	25
CHAPTER TWO --- LITERATURE REVIEW -----	29
2.1 Theoretical Literature	33
2.2 Empirical Literature	38
2.3 Conceptual Framework	65
2.4 Theoretical Framework	66
CHAPTER THREE --- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY -----	68
3.1 Research Design	68

3.2 Universe	68
3.3 Sampling Strategy	69
3.4 Population Frame	70
3.5 Tools and Methods of Data Collection	71
3.5.1 Methods of Data Collection	71
3.5.2 Data Analysis Type and Technique	71
3.6 Ethical Considerations	72
3.7 Field Experience	73
CHAPTER FOUR---DATA ANALOYSIS -----	75
4.1. Beyond Labels: Navigating Identities and Decrypting Transgender Bill	81
4.2. Empowering Diversity: The Movements Paving the Path of Inclusivity	90
4.3. The Catalyst of Change from Pixels to Pages	98
4.4. Spectrum of Love: Contravene Cultural Notions	106
4.5. Breaking Barriers: Exploring the Intersection of Religion and the LGBTIQ Community	111
4.6. Shedding Light on Unveiling Realities: Complex Nexus of HIV and Mental Health Cases Regarding LGBTIQ Community	117
4.7. Shifting Dynamics: Criminalization and Decriminalization Outlooks	123
CHAPTER FIVE --- KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION -----	130
CHAPTER SIX---SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS --	145
6.1 Summary	145
6.2 Conclusion	147
6.3 Limitations of the Study	150

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research	151
REFERENCES -----	152
APPENDICES -----	166
ANNEXURE -A --- Interview Guide	166
ANNEXURE -B --- Plagiarism Report	169

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No</b>
Table 4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents	76
Table 4.2 Age of the Respondents	77
Table 4.3 Gender of the Respondents	78
Table 4.4 Educational Attainment of the Respondents	79
Table 4.5 Program in which Respondents were enrolled in	80
Table 4.6 Family Structure of the Respondents	81

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No</b>
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework	65
Figure 2 Theoretical Model of Intersectionality Theory	66
Figure 3 Theoretical Model of Minority Stress Theory	67
Figure 4 Understanding of Respondents regarding Intersex and Transgender.	83

## LIST OF ANNEXURES

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No</b>
Annexure -A Interview Guide	166
Annexure -B Plagiarism Report	169



## ACRONYMS

AIDs	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APA	American Psychological Association
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
CDA	Capital Development Authority
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
DS	Development Studies
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
ECL	Exit Control List
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
IR	International Relations
IT	Information Technology
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer.
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MSM	Men who have sex with men.
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PDM	Pakistan Democratic Movement
PPC	Pakistan Penal Code (Act of 1860)

PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
XXY-Chromosomes	Known as Klinefelter syndrome where men are born with an extra X Chromosome.
XYY- Chromosomes	XYY syndrome is a genetic condition found in males only. It is not caused by parents but by a random error in cell division.

## **GLOSSARY**

Aurat March	It is a socio-political movement organized by liberal feminists in Pakistan. The basic agenda of this march is to fight against harassment, violence, minority rights, and reproductive justice.
Eunuch	A man who has been castrated.
Hijra	A person who is registered as a male at birth identifies as female or neither male nor female. Hijras are Eunuch and Intersex people.
Khawaja Sira	It is an umbrella term encompassing all gender identities, known as third gender. Also known as Transgender in the Urdu language.
Khusra	Trans or cross-dressers castrated man known as Eunuch. Have both male-female organs or undergone surgery to change sex also known as Intersex people.
Waria	A man who represents the behavior, appearance, and nature of a woman.
Zina	Sexual intercourse between men and women outside the marriage.
Zina Ordinance 1979	Whosoever is guilty of Zina must be liable for harsh punishment such as a hundred lashes or stoning to death.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community has been a subject of debate for years. After an utmost struggle, some countries started recognizing their identity and rights therefore, the LGBTIQ community is receiving more affirmation than ever before (Taylor, 2013). However, in Pakistan, the LGBTIQ community is still in the pipeline due to their status as sexual minorities. Many movements like the Aurat March have been playing an important role in creating more tolerance among people towards LGBTIQ individuals. Therefore, this study explored the perception of young individuals on the social inclusion of the LGBTIQ community and whether their identity should be criminalized or decriminalized.

The term LGBTIQ+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer. The plus sign in this acronym represents the other diverse sexual orientations, gender expression, gender identity, and sexual characteristics in individuals who identify themselves in these categories. L is an abbreviation for lesbian, referred to as a woman who has an interest in other women enduring romantic, sensual emotions and physical attraction. Whereas G stands for gay men who endure romantic, sexual, and emotional attraction toward other men. This same-sex relationship is often defined under the term homosexuality. Whereas B stands for bisexual individuals who are physically attracted to people of more than one gender (Morrison, 2022).

Here, T stands for transgender people whose gender identity differs from the typically associated sex assigned at birth. Their internal sense of gender differs from the sex that has been assigned at birth or a gender attributed by society therefore, they either identify themselves as male, female, or in transition and also undergo medical interventions considered as trans people (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016; Morrison, 2022). Another category that is mostly confused with trans

individuals is intersex people. Intersex individuals are born with sex characteristics that do not typically fit into either male or female bodies since they have a wide range of natural bodily variations (Rashid & Rashid, 2022; Morrison, 2022). In south-Asian nations, transgenders are usually known as Khawaja Sira, or Hijra who publicly dresses themselves as women. Whereas Khusra is a word of Urdu language that refers to intersex people (Rashid & Rashid, 2022). Lastly, queer individuals inclusively allow diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expression, and sex characteristics also known as SOGIESC (Morrison, 2022).

Gender identity consists of two elements, firstly, the identity which represents the person's inner sense of self, and secondly, how people express themselves to others. There are two defined assigned sexes by society male for masculine expression and female for feminine expression. Sexual orientation is a complex phenomenon that incorporates sexual and emotional attraction, behavior, and identity with others who share the same emotions. Both sexual orientation and gender identity are usually used under the same umbrella however, bisexual, queer, and trans individuals may face exclusion from both heterosexual and LGBTIQ communities because of their multiple social positions (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016).

The LGBTIQ community is also known as the sexual minority group which is an umbrella term referring to certain gender and sexual identities. This minor group was primarily known as homosexuals in the 1960s. Later, it was replaced with the term Gay because homosexuality belongs to one group rather than other sexual orientations and gender identities, such as queer people. In the past LGBTIQ community was treated with harsh behavior and one of the prominent cases was the Sodomy case by Richard Cornish in 1625 against homosexuals. It was reported that he was sentenced to death therefore, this case was highlighted as an example of discrimination against homosexual individuals (Nabila, 2020).

The patterns of social acceptance regarding the LGBTIQ community have been changed after the utmost struggle for decades. As a consequence, several countries have now provided full acceptance, some have partially accepted while others are still hesitant to accept their status. The trends of acceptance of the LGBTIQ community have been a subject of change over the years as today LGBTIQ youth are coming out to their families and peers to disclose their identity and are now experiencing more acceptance and affirmation than ever before therefore, their mental health, physical health and wellbeing is more prioritized (McCormick & Baldrige, 2019).

In the context of Pakistan, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgenders, Intersex, and Queer communities are considered sexual minorities who face criticism because homosexuality is a sinful act in Islam and liable to harsh punishment (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013; Loft et al., 2022; Mustafa, 2022). In 2018, the government of Pakistan passed the transgender bill which aimed to provide rights to everyone under the terminology transgender which became a heated debate violating the religious and socio-cultural norms of Pakistani society (Islam, 2020).

Pakistan is an Islamic state where homosexuality is considered illegal and socially unacceptable. Anyone committing this sin must be punishable by prison sentences of up to ten years therefore, the LGBTIQ community lives underground. Pakistan still uses the same laws and penal code introduced by the British Empire in India seventy-three years ago (Gamage, 2021). However, laws for transgender people are quite identifiable as the constitution of Pakistan ensures the safety and well-being of all minorities such as access to the right to vote, access to public offices, equal health care, and education without any discrimination (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013; Farhat et al., 2020; Islam, 2020; Gamage, 2021; Ahmed, 2022; Loft et al., 2022; Mustafa, 2022).

Currently, the Western media proudly endorse the idea of LGBTIQ characters under the guise of gender equality and liberal ideologies, therefore, it impacts people's stereotypical opinions and attitudes towards the LGBTIQ community (Thomson, 2019). Still, the LGBTIQ community encounters challenges in disclosing and even identifying their identities. They usually seek information about their identity through the Internet. Moreover, online sites are more acceptable in providing them space which leads to their better well-being (Fox & Ralston, 2016). However, Pakistan's government banned apps like Tinder and Grindr because such dating apps are helping the LGBTIQ community by providing a platform to connect and interact with each other (Gamage, 2021).

Sigmund Freud believed that all human beings are innately bisexual, and they can be heterosexual, or homosexual based on their experiences with their parents and others so, it should not be viewed as a pathology (Gadit, 2009). However, People mostly associate diverse gender identities with having mental disorders (Colibri, 2018). Similarly, people associate unprotected heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual contact as the cause of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV for instance, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Pakistan is seven times higher in men than women due to sexual intercourse, contaminated blood, and injecting drugs (Rajabali et al., 2008; Gadit, 2009). Consequently, it has become an alarming situation for Pakistan especially living in an Islamic state that is against all these practices.

Moreover, this study emphasized the concept of criminalization as countries like Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iran, Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Maldives consider the LGBTIQ community subject to criminalization (Lennox & Waites, 2013; Nicol et al., 2018; Loft et al., 2022; Mugisha, 2019). Whereas countries like India, Sri Lanka, Armenia, Mozambique, and Bangladesh are working on decriminalization processes of

the LGBTIQ community promoting LGBTIQ rights (Vanita, 2004; Baudh, 2013; Mugisha, 2019; Cottet & Picq, 2019; Loft et al., 2022). Moreover, this study explored the perspective of youth in light of the different socioeconomic and demographic characteristics regarding all the above-mentioned variables.

This study focused only on certain sexual minorities which include the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer individuals in Pakistan because the majority existing population in Pakistan consists of LGBTIQ individuals and this study aims to explore the status of homosexuality, trans rights, intersex rights, and the emergence of queer and bisexual individuals which is a taboo in Pakistani society. However, the + category was not prioritized in this research because it is still emerging and is less recognized.

### **1.1. Problem Statement**

The escalation of the LGBTIQ community has been raising concern for countries like Pakistan due to the community's ideology against the moral, religious, and cultural values since it's a majority Islamic-based country; however, some parts of the world and more liberal societies aiming to provide acceptance of this community. This ever-increasing controversy regarding the acceptability and unacceptability of the LGBTIQ community required in-depth study in Pakistan. Moreover, this study's primary interest was to discern and scrutinize how the LGBTIQ community is perceived, overtly discussed, and covertly categorized by individuals in culturally and religiously traditional countries like Pakistan. Several research studies on LGBTIQ communities have been proficiently conducted by developed countries. However, there are very few prominent studies in developing countries especially in Pakistan since the acceptance of the LGBTIQ community has been a contentious topic because of its exceptionable status which is a stigma therefore, it is a rarely studied phenomenon that requires a significant amount of attention



in the area of research. Therefore, this research highlighted the perspective of young individuals regarding the recognition of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistani society since they are struggling to be accepted and have equal rights as sexual minorities. Furthermore, this study intended to examine the behavior of people towards LGBTIQ individuals since the advent of the LGBTIQ community became an escalating problem in Pakistani society and is a foreign notion due to its ideology that is against the moral values of society and culture which consequently appear as a forbidden act. Moreover, this study aimed to examine the criminalization and decriminalization status of LGBTIQ individuals whether it becomes socially acceptable or becomes a criminal offense since the transgender bill 2018 provoked the sentiments and sensitive notions of the people of Pakistan. Also, it was crucial to conduct research in Pakistan to add literature in the context of the developing world.

## **1.2. Research Objectives**

- To study the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents in order to construct different viewpoints regarding the LGBTIQ community.
- To analyze the perspectives of youth on the criminalization and decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan.
- To examine the consequences of the Aurat March in forbearance in Pakistani culture concerning the LGBTIQ community.
- To investigate the narrative of youth on the social acceptability of sexual minorities in Pakistan.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

- How do the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents affect their opinion regarding the LGBTIQ community?
- How do young people in Pakistan feel about the LGBTIQ community being decriminalized or criminalized?
- How does Aurat March contribute to the tolerance of sexual minorities in Pakistani culture?
- How does the youth perceive the status of social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan?

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The advent of the LGBTIQ community has been called into question due to its immoral beliefs which are disapproved by Pakistani culture and religion. As a result, the LGBTIQ community is facing the utmost struggle and intolerance in Pakistan. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand how young respondents view the social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community. Additionally, this study was significant for highlighting the problems encountered by the LGBTIQ community. Also, this research analyzed the perspectives of youth on whether the acceptance of the LGBTIQ community should be considered a criminalized or decriminalized phenomenon. This research would help make a better understanding of LGBTIQ notions in Pakistani culture, will also help in future studies, and will enrich existing literature.

### **1.5. Operational Definition of Major Terms**

The topic of the study is ‘Social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community’ in Pakistan. The operational definitions of major terms are mentioned below:

#### **i. LGBTIQ**

The term LGBTIQ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. L stands for Lesbians who exhibit romantic, sensual emotions and physical attraction to other women. Whereas G is an abbreviation for gay men who endure romantic, sexual, and emotional attraction toward other men. Here, B stands for Bisexual people who are capable of feeling romantic, emotional, or physical attraction to people of other genders (Morrison, 2022). T is an acronym for Transgender people whose gender identity differs from the typically associated sex assigned at birth, therefore, either they identify themselves as male, female, or in transition (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016; Morrison, 2022). I stands for Intersex individuals who are born with sex characteristics that do not typically fit into either male or female bodies since they have a wide range of natural bodily variations (Rashid & Rashid, 2022; Morrison, 2022). Lastly, queer individuals inclusively allow diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (Morrison, 2022). In this present research on LGBTIQ, I have explored the social status of the LGBTIQ community whether they are socially acceptable community or facing exclusion from the Pakistani society.

## **ii. Youth**

To define youth, there is no universal definition of youth hence, the United Nations unanimously member States defined youth as a person aged between 15 to 24 years who comprises around 1.2 billion people, representing 16% of the global population youth. Moreover, youth can be a positive workforce for the development of the country through knowledge and opportunities (Demeter&Bratucu, 2014). Whereas Pakistan's Ministry of Youth Affairs defines youth as the population aged between 15 to 29 years (Bhutto, 2008). In this present research, youth, in my opinion, is a period when young individuals are fully active in participating in society, aged between 20 to 27 years old. This research has explored the perspective of youth because young

individuals are the future of Pakistan therefore, it is important to incorporate them to know their views regarding the rise of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan.

### **iii. Social Acceptance**

It is a very comprehensive term that includes social perceptions regarding LGBTIQ individuals as well as the consensus for laws and policies that promote equality and well-being for LGBTIQ people and protect them from violence and discrimination (Flores, 2019). In this present research on social acceptance, I mean to see how youth accept the social status of the LGBTIQ community. Moreover, it was observed whether youth will provide the status of inclusion or exclusion from society.

### **iv. Criminalization**

Criminalization refers to the state mechanism that renders behavior criminal in nature. These processes target marginalized groups also known as dangerous classes and have long been the focus of criminalization procedures as the perpetrators of crime (Henne, 2018). In this present research, I have focused on the issue of criminalization since cultural and societal values are against the ideology of the LGBTIQ community therefore, it was crucial to understand whether the acceptance of LGBTIQ should be criminalized as a criminal offense or should be legalized as an individual choice.

### **v. Decriminalization**

According to the report of the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2001), the act of decriminalization is taking away someone's status of criminal law which means certain acts are no longer applicable as criminal offenses. Over the years, decriminalization policies have been endorsed and supported by different human rights

organizations such as WHO, UNAIDS, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch with the support of feminists and groups of the LGBTIQ community(Luo, 2020). Currently,many countries are also working on the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community through legal ways therefore, this present study analyzed the concept of decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community through the perspective of young individuals in Pakistan.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review for this thesis comes from theoretical and empirical canons. This chapter provides a detailed overview of the literature regarding the social acceptance of LGBTIQ to demonstrate why it has developed as an important topic of research and contributes to knowledge production in this field. The review begins with a brief historical background on the LGBTIQ community, followed by theoretical and empirical literature on the study.

#### **History**

The concept of homosexuality and a third gender has been defined into the category of sex, gender, sexuality, or sexual desire. Sex is biologically defined as male, female, or intersex while gender is a socially constructed assigned role to an individual in terms of how they are born. In most conservative societies two main gender roles are accepted by the society as male for man and female for woman. A male is a person showing his masculinity whereas a female shows femininity in their appearance and behavior socially. In most societies, it is expected for men and women to be attracted to each other known as heterosexuality (Gamage, 2021). Gender identity consists of two constituents, firstly, the identity which represents the person's inner sense of self, and secondly, how people express themselves to others (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016).

Meanwhile, intersex individuals are born with sex characteristics that do not typically fit into either male or female bodies since they have a wide range of natural bodily alterations (Rashid & Rashid, 2022; Morrison, 2022). Whereas transgender do not identify themselves according to the sex assigned at birth (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016; Morrison, 2022). In south-Asian nations, transgenders are usually known as Khawaja Sira, or Hijra who publicly dresses

themselves as women. Whereas Khusra is a word of Urdu language that refers to intersex people (Rashid & Rashid, 2022).

Gamage (2021) in his study underlined the concept of heterosexuality as it is normal and legal whereas people who deviate are known as sexual minorities. The LGBTIQ community refers to 'other' stereotyping as homosexuals therefore, they are being stigmatized and discriminated against whereas sexuality is defined as desire towards someone else mostly the opposite gender. However, homosexuality, heterosexuality, and bisexuality refer to the sexual desires towards a person of the same, opposite, both sexes and genders, that attraction could be psychological, emotional, sexual, or physical. Transgender people are categorized as male, female, both or neither while can be heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, non-sexual, or asexual.

Sexual orientation is a complex phenomenon that includes sexual and emotional attraction and identity with others who share the same emotions. Both sexual orientation and gender identity are usually used under the same umbrella however, bisexual, queer, and trans individuals may face exclusion from both heterosexual and LGBTIQ communities because of their multiple social positions (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016). Over recent years there have been increased cases of unacceptability of LGBTIQ communities which can be observed through hate speech, discrimination, and negative attitudes of the people towards them. Such kind of negative treatment worsens their mental health, and it becomes very difficult for them to accept themselves and be expressive in society (Nabila, 2020).

The constructivist debate talks about gay theory which highlights that gay sexuality has historical and cultural background change over time and context. The meaning of gayness is not fixed rather it depends on social and cultural factors such as history, power relations, and social norms moreover, it's a product of modern Western culture and doesn't reflect the cultural

diversity of human sexual experience. The debate of constructivism deals with both social and cultural values of identity. Furthermore, the nature/nurture debate highlights the origin of sexual orientation while the determinism/voluntarism debate focuses on individuals changing sexual orientation (Ortiz, 1993).

In the late 1920s, the Society of Human Rights was founded by Henry Gerber in Chicago as the first organization in the US supporting gay rights. After a huge struggle, the concept of gay pride shifted from shame to pride, and this community was no longer afraid to embrace their sexuality in public. Furthermore, the philosophy of great pride assumes that sexuality is not only but also should be the primary source of identification, community, and self-esteem (Nabila, 2020). Nevertheless, in US history, the LGBTIQ community was criminalized because of their same-sex sexual behavior through sodomy laws. Also, it is considered sinful because many religions were affected by the past and present attitudes of this community. Therefore, religious institutions and other faith-based organizations stood against Homosexuality. Therefore, the historical attitudes of people towards this community have been profoundly negative (Kim, 2009).

Moreover, LGBTIQ people and their rights in the United States were viewed in three categories which are sick, criminal, and sinful. This trend was commonly seen in religious and secular cultures condemning homosexuality. The term Sick mostly referred to homosexuality as a Pathological mental illness until 1973. But later on, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) declassified it as an illness and also removed it from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM). However, they were still discriminated against and were not even allowed to serve in public school. The second category that defines homosexuality is criminality (Kim, 2009; Bass & Nagy, 2020).



The Essentialist debate, on the other hand, focuses on whether LGBTIQ identities are innate or socially constructed however, they mostly argue that their identities are usually depending on a person's nature determined by both psychological and biological factors. Moreover, identity can be categorized on various bases, as the essentialist school calls it completely natural as biological sex which cannot be changed and determined by genetics whereas race is a socially constructed phenomenon that can be changed with time and cultural context which resembles nurture category where people do not usually choose themselves. Therefore, identity categories depend on factors like biology, culture, and personal choice (Ortiz, 1993).

In the 21st century, the acceptance of the LGBTIQ community has spread all around the world. A study conducted by Andrew R. Flores (2019) called the Global Acceptance Index ranks 141 countries around the world regarding the relative level of social acceptance of LGBTIQ rights, 80 countries recognized their rights, whereas 46 countries denied their acceptance, while 15 countries did not experience any kind of change. Therefore, this number shows that there is a massive change regarding the LGBTIQ community's acceptability and unacceptability globally (Nabila, 2020).

Therefore, over the years, there has been a frequent rise in the LGBTIQ community through feminist and human rights movements globally. However, stigmatization is still associated with sexual minorities due to cultural, ideological, social, and religious notions. Few countries of the world are now openly accepting sexual minorities and their gender rights while for some countries, it is still illegal to have same-sex relations. The resistance to social acceptability can be observed through many aspects mentioned in theoretical and empirical literature.

## 2.1. Theoretical Literature

Theoretical literature comprises theories supporting the narrative of social acceptability, the unacceptability of the LGBTIQ community, and the adverse effects of discrimination causing mental health problems. In this regard, intersectionality theory as a major guideline along with minority stress theory, feminist theory, and queer theory explores the status of acceptability or resistibility towards the LGBTIQ community.

Intersectionality theory created a way of understanding LGBTIQ individual's social identities and experiences which intersect and interact with each other. Moreover, it identifies individuals to cooperate with their multiple identities within social structures, different institutions, and practices that may impact their interactions. Furthermore, intersectionality theory recognizes social institutions play an important role in shaping power dynamics and identity processes. In the context of the LGBTIQ community, social institutions can perpetuate systems of privilege and marginalization. Also, it recognizes the pathways in which LGBTIQ individuals are impacted by other forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and stigmatization(Few-Demo et al., 2016).

The trends of social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community have intensified over the years due to which people considered it legal, decriminalized it, and gave equal access to rights and protection to LGBTIQ individuals (Vanita, 2004; Baudh, 2013; Mugisha, 2019; Cottet & Picq, 2019; Loft et al., 2022). Thus, it is crucial for LGBT parent families, policies, and laws of institutions to strengthen marginalized communities (Few-Demo et al., 2016).

Moreover, LGBTIQ youth with supportive families are eight times less likely to adopt suicide and six times less likely to have depression. Most of the time families lack the knowledge and awareness about their child's gender identity and sexual orientation therefore, they couldn't

help them or respond appropriately. Therefore, it is important for families to seek a better understanding of the meaning of their child having an LGBTIQ identity (McCormick & Baldrige, 2019).

In the preceding years, feminism theory has shifted trends of stereotyping genders and bringing equality therefore, emphasis on the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community and providing them with merit-based status was highlighted (Gedro& Mizzi, 2014). The third wave of feminism fights against sexual harassment in the workplace and provides them power. The huge contribution of African American feminists highlighted the role of intersectionality in women's experience (Tyson, 2023).

Along with this, critical theory focused on feminist movements that started the acceptance of beliefs, and queer theory focused on sex, gender, and sexuality rather than the traditional definition of male and female. However, white women hold more powerful positions, but the feminist movement emphasized multicultural, global, and non-heteronormative identities. Furthermore, the fourth wave of feminism highlighted sexism and incorporated women of every color, lesbian, and transgender women highlighting intersectionality in order to achieve equality (Tyson, 2023).

The term queer has been taken into negative connotation for years due to stigmatization associated with it because it is considered a shameful practice, indicates a disgraceful identity, and is socially unacceptable. Therefore, huge resistance was faced because it was considered against natural laws. However, it has changed due to resistance movements by activists and academia into a positive connotation incorporating intersectionality and plurality. Term queer theory originated from the scholarly work of de Lauretis (1991) on lesbian and gay sexualities therefore, this theory fixes and stabilizes the identities of male, female, gay, lesbian, and

transgender moreover, it represents the concept of gender and sexuality to understand human diversity. Pinar (1998) mentioned in his study that queer theory challenges the concept of reproduction of sameness, differences, and of patriarchy. Furthermore, Butler's in 1999, presented his view on queer theory emphasizing the notion of performativity that it is related to gender identity since individuals perform their gender according to social practices and rules (Gedro& Mizzi, 2014).

People associate their queer children with having mental disorders therefore, they throw them out of the house. This is not just religious-based discrimination, but culture also plays a huge role in defining it as a taboo (Colibri, 2018). However, Sigmund Freud believed that all human beings are innately bisexual, and they can be heterosexual, or homosexual based on their experiences with their parents and others so, homosexuality should not be viewed as a pathology while other analysts believed it because of pathological family relationships during an oedipal period (Gadit, 2009).

Moreover, people usually associate mental illnesses with these homosexual people because it is considered against natural laws. In Pariaman, people believe that sexual deviations are because of a mental health disorder that has been triggered by the influence of jinn (Sarhini& Bintang, 2020).

The minority stress theory presented by Meyer highlights the experiences of LGBTIQ individuals exposing them to chronic stress due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Advocacy, education, and research have increased the acceptance of LGBTIQ individuals in recent years, but stigmatization and discrimination still lead to higher rates of suicide among them. Therefore, mental health should be prioritized which can be affected by internal and external stressors, such as family rejection, unemployment, heteronormative cultural practices,

and lack of political participation, resulting in mood disorders, PTSD, depression, anxiety, drug abuse, and addicted to alcohol consumption and may end up in juvenile. Moreover, suicide rates have increased due to stigmatization and discriminatory practices. Therefore, it is essential to create an inclusive healthcare environment, educate the masses, establish anti-discriminatory policies, use appropriate language, and provide athletic training irrespective of sexual orientation and gender identity (Quinn, 2020).

Consequently, research presented by Cammett (2009), Hunt & Moodie-Mills (2012), and Grooms (2020) showed similar results that the LGBTIQ community is facing structural inequalities due to which there is an increased likelihood of exposure to substance abuse, sexual harassment, and mental health problems. Moreover, Gay and transgender people mostly end up in the juvenile system because of family conflict, child abuse, and homelessness since their families don't accept them; therefore, to meet their material, emotional, and physical needs they end up doing dirty work. Furthermore, the LGBTIQ community has been subjected to sexual and physical abuse because of their homosexual personalities. Therefore, they end up in juvenile systems being involved in illegal activities such as drug sales, theft, and violating laws (Cammett, 2009; Hunt & Moodie-Mills, 2012; Grooms, 2020).

Moreover, similar research showed that LGBTIQ youth have encountered challenges in the foster care system since most of them have dropped out of school, are unemployed, or are involved in the criminal justice system. Moreover, LGBTIQ youth also experience higher rates of mental health issues, being involved in drugs, and sexual exploitation as compared to heterosexual individuals. Moreover, they encounter higher rates of violence and threats at school. Whereas when they opt for foster care, they tend to face intersectional challenges related to race, gender, and sexual identities. Furthermore, LGBTIQ youth aren't comfortable sharing their

information and still encounter maltreatment. These foster care employees and parents lack cultural competency which exacerbates their sensitive condition. Moreover, those religious and moral-based states allow agencies to discriminate against LGBTIQ individuals whereas some states do have anti-discriminatory laws (Grooms, 2020).

Studies conducted in different countries show a relation between homosexuals and increased psychological issues, in New Zealand, 21-year-old homosexuals and bisexuals were four times more exposed to the risk of depression and five times more dependence on nicotine. Two times more risk of addiction and six times more suicidal attempts. Whereas in Vancouver, the life expectancy of gay and bisexual men is less than 8 to 20 years than that of other men, while in the US 37% of gay men face verbal harassment and 5% physical violence thus more cases of suicide have been reported in homosexual men than heterosexual men (Gadit, 2009).

In Pakistan, people are visiting clinics to talk about homosexual inclination because of their fear, anxiety, and depression associated with sexual preferences. One of the cases explained that a young boy's heart beats so quickly when hears a masculine voice and many other individuals are being familiarized through mutual friends or the internet who are involved in such activities. Scientists held it as psychopathology negating genetic and environmental factors so, hormonal changes during uterus development is a major factor for such changes (Gadit, 2009). Therefore, different perspectives have been observed under cultural, religious, and social norms regarding the LGBTIQ community.

Hence, a variety of beliefs, sentiments, and behavioral inclinations generally persist among people concerning other humans, social phenomena, and cultures. However, the development of these attitudes is the interplay of multiple factors such as culture, religious doctrines, social institutions, and ethnocentric groups. The cultural and religious pedagogies

endorse the idea of heteronormativity e.g., men should be attracted to women and same-sex marriages should be considered derogatory and immoral practice. While societal institutions and social categorization of gendered norms reinforce the ideas and standards regarding the stereotyping or non-stereotyping of LGBTQ individuals (prohibiting and penalizing same-sex marital unions) (Dovidio et al., 1970).

Consequently, the functionality of intersectionality helped LGBTIQ adults who claim that society has now become more accepting of their identity in the past few decades and their number will grow further since people will interact more, advocating about this issue through different platforms, engaging celebrities and LGBT family raising their kids (Taylor, 2013).

## **2.2. Empirical Literature**

Over few years social acceptability of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, and queer people has increased due to more awareness, movements, and education. Due to this, it has now become a human rights issue to discriminate against LGBTIQ individuals. The empirical review comprises subheadings focusing on facets containing the idea of social acceptability and the unacceptability with various factors like the rise of HIV, mental health problems, the process of criminalization, trends of media, the role of Aurat March, transgender bill and decriminalization processes regarding LGBTIQ community.

### **2.2.1. Exploring the Global Trends of Social Acceptability and Unacceptability of the LGBTIQ Community**

Social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community has been intensified over the years due to which people considered it a legal act that must be decriminalized by providing equal access to rights and protection to LGBTIQ individuals. Over several years, European countries started the

inclusion of the LGBTIQ community by giving them rights and responsibilities. Now they have the status to formally register their marriage and live together as same-sex couples. Moreover, the European Union and International human rights supported this act to be implemented at the national level (Digoix, 2020).

LGBTIQ community has gained acceptance over the recent years since society has now become more accepting and recognizes their identity through advocacy and awareness by engaging celebs. Today the ratio of LGBT population acceptance is much higher than ever before, the majority around 59% claim there is social acceptance in the public eye whereas 21% say there is little or no acceptance. Americans now allow same-sex marriages and very few discourage homosexuality. Additionally, a survey showed that at the age of twelve, individuals first time felt that they were something other than heterosexuals and for some, it becomes difficult to understand what they are either lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, come to figure this out when turning seventeen (Taylor, 2013).

Hailey et al. (2020) in their research highlighted the role of the family in creating a protective environment against racialized society, traumas, and oppression faced by the LGBTIQ community among African-American minority youth. Due to their diverse identity, LGBTIQ individuals experience discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization which negatively affect their mental health. Therefore, it is crucial for family, friends, mentors, and other individuals to support them in building resilience moreover, community intervention and policies are important for African-American sexual minorities to work against racism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Besides this, it also became crucial for Christian social workers to gain psychoeducation to understand sexual orientation and gender identity. However, those families who are open to



accepting this change aren't exhibiting strong acceptance which will increase with time. Consequently, they require trust-building, patience, education, and communication (McCormick & Baldrige, 2019).

LGBTIQ community also faces rejection from their origin communities therefore, they have to migrate to the safest place, but they are still stigmatized on a racial basis due to which they face financial insecurity. However, discrimination also exists among the white or western LGBTIQ community and the global south's LGBTIQ community since these people have migrated from less privileged areas therefore, they are facing disparities in socio-political conditions and maintaining social ties with the community. Different participant during an interview explained their challenges as the majority came to Quebec, Canada for study or work permits to stay permanently but those who couldn't get permanent permit experienced anxiety because their origin country doesn't allow a sexual minority to live freely and homosexuality is criminal therefore, they have to stay in Quebec because they provide rights for LGBTIQ community to have romantic and sexual relations with the same sex (Chbat et al., 2023).

Gay and transgender people mostly end up in the juvenile system because of family conflict, child abuse, and homelessness since their families don't accept them therefore, in order to meet their material, emotional, and physical needs they end up doing dirty work. They are also subjected to sexual and physical abuse because of their homosexual personalities. Therefore, due to this discrimination, they end up in juvenile systems, involved in drug sales, theft, illegal activities, and violating laws. A survey shows that 84% of gay and transgender students are victims of verbal harassment, 40% are physically harassed and 19% are physically assaulted moreover, they are also bullied in schools exacerbating their vulnerable situation (Hunt & Moodie-Mills, 2012).

The issue of LGBTIQ homelessness has been an emerging trend for years. Research showed that around 320000-400000 LGBTIQ youth experience homelessness because they are trying to avoid the stigma associated with their identity and are often forced out based on their sexual identity. Youth usually take refuge in LGBTIQspecific safe spaces, but they continue to face stigma. Moreover, they are involved in drugs and alcohol. The author of the article discussed that Boystown's LGBTIQ community created a hegemonic boundary that excludes racialized LGBTIQ individuals who had left their houses. There are physical and metaphysical spaces for homonormative communities, but homeless youth of color aren't welcome since they are different by gender identity and race (Knee, 2019).

On the other hand, one of the biggest reasons for stress inducer among LGBTIQ teens is school bullying which is faced by 26% of LGBTIQ teens moreover, those teens who don't go to their family have a lack of acceptance which becomes a huge obstacle (McCormick & Baldrige, 2019). However, they are still stigmatized by society as around 39% of LGBT individuals are rejected by their families, or close friends whereas 30% have been physically attacked, 29% aren't allowed to visit worship places and 21% are unfairly treated by an employer. Furthermore, only 56% of the population talked about their sexual orientation and gender identity to their mother while 39% told their father. This wasn't an easy task, and some ruined their relationship with their parents (Taylor, 2013).

Structural inequality in a society leads to increase oppression of sexual minorities, especially queer people due to which they are subjected to criminalization. Due to the lack of opportunities queer people are living in poverty, and facing the forced governmental system of punishing sexual minorities affects their mental health causing traumas during imprisonment, death penalties, and biased judicial systems for both homophobia and transphobia communities.

A report by the National Gay and lesbian task force shows that LGBT youth are facing homelessness due to familial problems leading them towards substance abuse, mental health problems, and vulnerability to sexual harassment. Therefore, queer youth end up in the juvenile and then in the criminal justice system (Cammett, 2009).

### **2.2.2. Concept of the LGBTIQ Community in South Asian Culture**

In South-Asian nations, transgenders are usually known as Khawaja Sira, Khusra, or Hijra who publicly dresses themselves as women. Historically, these people in the subcontinent served as the caretakers of the Mughal empire and also made huge contributions to poetry, music, and art (Aurat Foundation, 2016) however, somewhat they lost those respectable positions and served in begging and prostitution (Saria, 2021). Hijras. No matter what they were doing, transgenders always faced marginalization, stigmatization, and oppression in society. These people always claim that God listens to their prayers (both dua and bad-dua) bestowing them with the unique ability to bring good fortune and fertility (Aurat Foundation, 2016).

The term transgender in South-Asian culture has its own meaning and is mostly used in terms of 'hijra' or 'Khawaja-Sira'. This term is generally believed all intersex people and trans people come under this term where they justify it as being born with alternative genitals therefore, a misleading narrative in Pakistani society has been developed that transgenders and trans people are called Hijras, and Hijras are born Intersex. The true interpretation of this is that intersex people have biological variation in genitals by birth whereas transgender is something related to gender identity where people associate certain personal identities as per their liking (Aurat Foundation, 2016). Moreover, the term Khawaja Sira is known to be a third gender in Pakistan whose rights and identity have become a heated debate (Jaffer, 2022).

The Constitution of Pakistan ensures the safety and wellbeing of all minorities including the LGBTIQ community however, provision of rights isn't guaranteed such as access to healthcare and education. Moreover, rights for transgender are fully given as they are issued national IDs, passports, driver's licenses, medical care, the right to vote, employment opportunities, and prohibits discrimination at school, work, or public places. Many community-based organizations are advocating LGBTIQ rights, but the lack of legal and governmental support makes it difficult for them to openly support this agenda. Since Pakistan is an Islamic state where homosexuality is considered an illegal, unethical, and sinful act and religious authorities label them as "Qaum-e-lut" (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013; Loft et al., 2022; Mustafa, 2022).

### **2.2.3. Religious Reluctance towards the LGBTIQ Community**

It was observed that religious people report more prejudice against homosexuality as compared to non-religious people. The three great monotheistic religions such as Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are stricter towards homosexuals when they rigorously adhere to their beliefs (Roggemans et al., 2015). The transgender community has a deep relationship with almost every religion including Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism where different terms such as Saris (Judaism), Eunuch (Christianity), Mukhannathun (Arabic), Tritiya-prakriti (Hinduism), Hijra (sub-continent), third gender, third sex, and Katoey (Buddhist) were used. Therefore, people associate these terms with their everyday use (Aurat Foundation, 2016).

Much of the resistance to accepting homosexuality is deeply rooted in religion as the majority of Muslim, Mormon, Catholic, and Evangelical Churches aren't friendly in accepting LGBTIQ people. Whereas there were mixed views regarding the acceptance of Protestant Churches and the Jewish religion. LGBT community itself is less religious as compared to the

general public since conflict lies between religious beliefs and their sexual orientation or gender identity (Taylor, 2013). Overall young Muslims mostly oppose homosexuality (Roggemans et al., 2015) and the majority of Muslim states like Pakistan, Iran, and Malaysia are openly defining homosexuality as a sin worse than murder. This act must be liable for punishment of either the death penalty, stoning to death, or life imprisonment or shall be liable to a fine and minimum 2 years imprisonment (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013; Loft et al., 2022).

There is a unanimous consensus of scholars of major Islamic schools of Shia and Sunni that homosexuality is forbidden (haram) and considered a psychological, physical, and moral disorder. The Shafi school also considers homosexual intercourse as heterosexual zina however, apart from the Hanafi school all schools agree on the same point whereas minor doctrines like Zahirism (a Sunnite doctrine) and Rafida (a Shi'ite doctrine) suggest that homosexuals should not be punished. Consensus on punishment regarding homosexuality has four leading Sunni schools (Shafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Jafari) and other Islamic scholars considering it a major sin and punishable by death. Whereas only for the Hanafi school homosexuality is a slightly less serious issue and can be punished through physical punishment (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013).

The Holy Quran doesn't explicitly use a word for homosexuals or homosexuality and there is no specific punishment mentioned for people having the same sexual relation however, there are frequently interpreted and associated terms for same-sex. Juristic explanation of homosexuality as an offense and approved to be punishable through stoning by death is derived from the narrative of the struggles of Prophet Lut with his people, in Bible the incident of the nephew of Abraham and guardian of two cities (Sodom and Gomorrah) which were in the land of Canaan where prostitution and excessive sins were taking place. In some places, the Bible

considers it a forbidden act and, in some cases, God condemns those exceeding lust. An incident of Lut's two daughters who were in the cave with their father, got drunk, and slept with him was the reason for their destruction; however, in the Quran, this version of the story doesn't exist, but Quran in Surah Hud suggest the prohibition of homosexuality, Surah Al-A'raf represented people Lut committing obscenity, Surah Al-Hijr describes them as people in sin, in Surah Ash-Shu'ara as people disobeying all limits, and Surah Al-Ankabut as people who commit vulgarity and practice wickedness (Rehman &Polymenopoulou, 2013).

Rehman &Polymenopoulou (2013) highlighted that government representatives and officials of majority Muslim and Islamic states openly refer to the Islamic religion as validation of human rights, defining homosexuality as a sin worse than murder and treating them inferior publicly to other human beings. In countries like Pakistan, Iran, and Malaysia LGBT individuals are treated as sub-human or abnormal people, advocacy for the LGBTIQ community is censored, and police raid constantly occurs to stop such activity. Islamic preachers define homosexuality as against the nature of human beings.

All constitutional laws of Pakistan abide the Islamic laws, and all decisions are to be taken under shariah-based laws which follow the guidance of the Holy Quran, Sunnah, and Hadith. In the context of Islam, Islam ensures guaranteed equal rights and respect for all human beings irrespective of their sex, gender, color, caste, or creed. As the Quran says in Surah I-Shura "To Allah belong the dominion of Heavens and Earth; He creates what he wills. He gives to whom He wills female, and He gives to whom He wills males. Or He makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren" (Aurat Foundation, 2016).

Therefore, laws about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgenders in Islam mentions that sex between persons of the same gender violates Islamic laws and comes under the acts of zina.

Sexual activity of the same gender is prohibited under the Pakistan Penal Code 1860 which criminalizes the acts of ‘carnal knowledge against the order of nature’ for that punishment with a maximum penalty (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013)

LGBT and intersex community is considered to be the most vulnerable groups in Pakistan despite all the challenges, this community is slowly fighting for its rights. Homosexuality is illegal in Pakistan because of religious and Shariah-based laws against it. In 2018, the Pakistani government passed a law section 377 where same-sex marriage is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and it is still criminalized in Pakistan. Therefore, it is difficult to measure the total population of the LGBTIQ community because, for the sake of survival, they hide their identities. However, it is estimated that tens of thousands of them live in Pakistan, especially in wealthy areas of Karachi (Mustafa, 2022).

#### **2.2.4. Critical Examination of the Transgender Bill**

In 2018, the government of Pakistan in parliament passed the transgender bill which aimed to provide rights to everyone under the terminology transgender, so they included Intersex individuals, Eunuchs, trans men, trans women, Khawaja Sira, and everyone else under the term of self-perceived identity. So, they highlighted that transgender should have equal rights such as the right to education, the use of appropriate pronouns for them, equal opportunities, citizenship, and identity with all governmental departments like NADRA. However, the problem raised by this is it gave room to everyone with a self-perceived identity to claim their rights (Islam, 2020).

The act defined transgender persons includes intersex, Khawaja Sira, and all other people whose gender identity differs from social norms (Redding, 2022). Jabbar (2020), highlighted the bill as the usage of the Western term transgender to express various other identities of SouthAsia.

The terms used in the transgender bill were intersex which refers to a person with a mixture of both male and female genital, Eunuch a person assigned with certain sex at birth but undergoes any surgery to change that, and trans men, women, or Khawaja Sira are people having gender identity which differs from cultural and societal norms. These definitions are closely related to Western terms or Western sexual categorization which are merely local expressions or signify the coloniality of transgender identity.

The terms Khawaja Sira and Hijra are umbrella terms for transgender whose gender identity differs from the assigned sex at birth. Since homosexuality is a crime in Pakistan and a grave sin in Islam as Khawaja Sira individuals provide refuge to homosexual men to express their sexuality. Whereas Khusra is a word of Urdu language that refers to intersex people (Rashid & Rashid, 2022). Individuals who identify themselves as LGBTQ experience a substantial amount of negative critique and stigmatization from different religious groups and organizations. During the research, the researcher observed that individuals were forced to conflict between their sexualities and religion and even if they chose their religion, the religious beliefs would never accept their sexual identities (Wheeler, 2013).

Ahmed (2022) highlighted that recently a bill was passed in Pakistan that was highlighted among the masses because of its stance on homosexual rights however, the transgender community claimed it was false information spread about the bill and labeled it for those who are struggling for separate identity as transgender but labeled as homosexuals. Some religious parties criticized the transgender rights bill and depicted it as a promotion of homosexuality. Pakistan's National Assembly passed the bill for the protection of transgender rights, equal access to education, basic health facilities, provision of national identity cards, freedom of expression, right to work, and right to vote.



In May 2018, the Pakistani government passed the Transgender Persons Act for the protection of their rights and to address other problems (Jaffar, et al., 2020). In contrast, the religious authority claimed it is the promotion of homosexuality in Pakistan. Jamaat-e-Islami senator Mushtaq Ahmed projected it necessary to have a medical certificate for registration of trans people in NADRA, and head of PDM Maulana Fazal u Rahman called this bill a rebellion against the Quran and Sunnah. For the support of trans rights Zanaiah Chaudhry (trans rights activist) stated that this act does not promote the marriage of a man to another man or woman to another woman, so it doesn't permit unnatural intercourse (Ahmed, 2022). Moreover, the verdict was misleadingly titled the Intersex for Protection of their rights which was proposed by Senator Mushtaq Ahmad. This act, through sections 14 and 20, criminalizes all gender-supporting care for intersex and transgender individuals, criminalizes gender identities, and denies protections based on gender dysphoria (Riaz et al., 2023).

### **2.2.5. Aurat March's Role in Fostering the LGBTIQ Inclusivity**

Over few years social acceptability of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, and queer people has increased due to more awareness, feminist movements, and education, therefore, now consider them as the third gender. Moreover, it has now become a human rights issue to discriminate against LGBTIQ individuals (Fox & Ralston, 2016). Over the years, women movements have transformed in confronting social, economic, political, and cultural differences against marginalized women (Batool, 2022).

A few years back, from 2019 to 2020 Aurat march focused more on the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community, and most marches are being organized and mobilized by the LGBTIQ community. This community was shunned for years, is now playing a front role, and gained acceptance publicly. One of the movement's supporters claimed that religion has no place in this

movement since it erases the role of the queer community. Moreover, Fariha Aziz added that there is much greater involvement of the LGBTIQ community posing a threat to their identity. Now marchers use the word 'womxn' rather than just women which depicts the inclusion of non-binary individuals (Saigol & Chaudhary, 2020). All the years of ultimate struggle rights for transgender are fully given as they are issued national IDs, passports, driver's licenses, medical care, the right to vote, employment opportunities, and prohibits discrimination at school, work, or public places (Farhat et al., 2020; Loft et al., 2022).

The Constitution of Pakistan ensures the safety, security, and well-being of all minorities including the LGBT community however, the provision of rights isn't guaranteed as health services are being neglected especially access to HIV and AIDs services, provision of educational services is not given, and they are being abandoned in all social services as well. Many community-based organizations and feminist movements are focusing on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender but they don't publicly support this agenda because of stigmatization and lack of legal and governmental support for them. Moreover, homosexuality is considered an illegal, unethical, and sinful act in Pakistani society and religious authorities label them as "Qaum-e-lut" (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013).

Pakistan is the worst place for gender minorities due to which they must stay hidden for their whole lives however, if they expose themselves to society they will be harassed and bullied by people. People use abusive language which causes extreme humiliation against them. Running from such situations gay men usually get married and start their dual life, one to satisfy society and one for themselves. This is not an easy situation for them because the threat of being caught lies on their head and nobody will support them. However, it is assumed that conditions for

transgenders have become better but there is still much intolerance because of the stigmatization they face from society (Colibri, 2018).

### **2.2.6. Case Studies Shedding Light on the LGBTIQ Community in Pakistan**

The emergence of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgenders has been prominently seen in certain cases mentioned below. As Azhar defines though Gay liberalization is not commonly practiced in Pakistan, some people do believe it's the best country to be gay as some described Karachi as "a gay man's paradise". Pakistan has been exposed to this new wave of the rise of the gay community especially in Karachi where the gay community can be easily located online through GPS and online social media profiles. Pakistan is a patriarchal society where it is important to marry a member of the opposite sex; however, this approach doesn't stop them from being in physical relations with the same sex even after getting married. Homosexuality in Pakistan is considered sinful, and the clergy uses Quranic references to indicate that God condemns homosexuality and its Shariah-based punishment. At the time of the British colonial era law of criminalization of having sex against the order of nature was introduced and in the 1980s its punishment was also been proposed but these laws are rarely enforced whereas these issues are dealt with within the family (Azhar, 2013).

A case of Pakistani Muslim queer, named Summer (changed name) is a Lahore-based activist working for the right of women, queer issues, and sexual minorities known as 'O.' She gave her narrative on criminalization as article 377 is used against trans-women particularly sex workers whereas a guy Farhan (name changed) member of 'O' stated section 377 is applicable mostly for hijras or extreme sexual violence. Farhan added that Hijras are being gang raped and then offered to the police as thieves who are again raped and justified their rape, but he doesn't believe that any LGBT person has been sent to jail under section 377. Therefore, this section

implements child molestation or rape, as in the famous case of Shahzina and Shumail who were married to each other, this case failed to justify the attempt of 377. After all, there was no penetration because both were women, therefore, they were charged with perjury (Lennox & Waites, 2013).

Moreover, Gay women face more difficulties than gay men as it would be much more difficult for them to stay together. Two girls Beena and Fatima planned to stay together where they would ask their gay guys to put in money together and buy a house where gay guys will have one portion and girls will have another one. Moreover, they believe Pakistan will soon accept this change (Azhar, 2013).

One of the very prominent cases has been highlighted that medical boards should test gender before marriage especially if one claims to have changed gender. A case of Aasma Bibi who has changed her gender to get married to a teenage girl and now claims to be Ali Akash tested her gender in the private laboratory under the court's order. On hearing court accused them of having same-sex marriage on which Akash also known as Aasma presents the medical report and new computerized national identity (CNIC) to prove her conversion. Moreover, their marriage was according to their free will and their families were also aware of this matter. Furthermore, the court testified girl who also claimed to be happy and satisfied with this marriage and that her husband was fulfilling her needs and wanted to live with Akash. The court then ordered to wait for further documents and medical reports to proceed with this case (Shirazi, 2020).

Later Akash name was put on the Exit Control List (ECL) and red warrant was issued against him because he failed to prove gender transition moreover, he did not appear in court or

even medical board, so the court ordered to put this case under homosexuality, fraud, and deception whereas his wife was sent to Dar-ul-Aman (Iqbal, 2020).

### **2.2.7. Role of Social Media in Paving the Way for the LGBTIQ Community**

Different NGOs and media platforms are creating awareness and advocating for sexual minorities such as loan schemes, scholarship programs, vocational training, and educational programs can be beneficial for their economic growth. Moreover, the media is also playing a role in eliminating stigma by portraying a positive image of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013; Loft et al., 2022; Mustafa, 2022).

Nowadays, the Western media dwell proudly on the idea of endorsing LGBTIQ characters under the guise of gender equality and liberal ideologies, however, this kind of inclusivity in media creates a significant impact on people's stereotypical perceptions and attitudes towards the LGBTIQ community (Thomson, 2019). LGBTIQ community encounters challenges in disclosing and even identifying their identities. They usually seek information about their identity through various media, especially through the Internet. Moreover, online sites are more acceptable in providing them space which leads to their better well-being (Fox & Ralston, 2016).

Historically, discriminating and stereotypical opinions prevailed among Western communities regarding LGBTIQ people because they were deemed as deviant, violent, and psychologically challenged individuals (Gross, 2005; Seif, 2017). However, from the late 1990's the mainstream media took a proactive approach to increase the positive representation of LGBTIQ in mass media to foster acceptance and optimistic visibility among people (Netzley, 2010). Therefore, the increase in the portrayal of LGBTIQ characters on television since the 1960s has been studied by various researchers (Dow, 2001; Shugart, 2003).

Further, Chung (2007) analyzed the quantitative representation of LGBTIQ characters among Australian, American, and other British programs and nearly thirty television channels were found depicting LGBTIQ characters. Also, the number rose from 58 characters in the 1970s to 306 characters in the 1990s. However, in recent years the number of character representation has been rising immensely as per by GLAAD (2016) report that highlighted 10.2% of characters on scripted prime-time series during the 2019 and 2020 broadcast television seasons were LGBTIQ. Thus, the inclusivity of LGBTIQ people in media can significantly contribute towards the changing perception, reducing stigmatization and enhancing self-identification with those individuals as homosexuals, queers, or gay (Hart, 2000).

Historically, the American comedian and actress Ellen DeGeneres' portrayal of Ellen Morgan as the first main gay character on a television program, which debuted in 1997 had a tremendous impact on public discourse as mainstream media hailed the DeGeneres representation of homosexuality (Dow, 2001). However, Ellen's representation immensely boosted the popularity of LGBTIQ characters in Television series. Though, numerous studies have demonstrated the relationship between media endorsement and its impact on audience attitudes and perceptions towards non-heterosexuality or non-cisgenders. Further, Calzo and Ward (2009) examined the attitudes of acceptance through media exposure among college students towards homosexuality, the results found depicted reduced stigmatization and prejudice related to homosexual individuals. Meanwhile, Hart (2000) further argues that the misleading and bogus portrayals of homosexual people in mainstream media tend to produce feelings of intolerance, prejudice, and homophobia among people.

Consequently, such representations of controversial ideas in media influence the attitudes and opinions of individuals, and these ideas shown on television alter the audience's perception

regarding social reality, an idea formulated by George Gerbner (1969) in his Cultivation theory. Considering the unacceptable culture towards non-heterosexual and non-cisgender individuals in Pakistan, it is of significant importance to explore the impact of endorsing LGBTIQ characters on media platforms on the perceptual acceptance and attitudes of Pakistani youth towards LGBTIQ individuals.

Ultimately, media acts as a powerful, and influential tool in shaping the perception and attitudes of individuals consuming it regarding the world (Gerbner, 1969). Additionally, a study by Gonta et al. (2017) suggested that the media exposure of LGBTIQ containing TV shows, and movies perpetuated the acceptance among the heterosexual population. Similarly, the role of media as a significant institution of society is undeniable in impacting people's attitudes towards diverse cultures, groups, and communities, for instance in America, nearly 16% knew a transgender person in real while the rest of Americans reported seeing the LGBTIQ community people on media (Stokes, 2015).

LGBTIQ individuals encounter challenges in disclosing and even identifying their identities. They usually seek information about their identity through the Internet. However, mainstream media limits and stereotypes them which leads to creating hurdles for them. In the US, there is more social acceptance but not complete yet. Therefore, the LGBTIQ community is still using informal sources online. The progression of LGBTIQ individuals moves from certain stages from sensitization to confusion to assumption and lastly commitment. Individuals tend to move from stages all alone. Yet, social media and networking sites have given them more new opportunities to discover and express their identity (Fox & Ralston, 2016).

With the massive global change, the media industry has been evolving which led to a shift in the concept of traditional television broadcast (Erickson et al., 2019). In recent years, a

significant number of streaming platforms, like Netflix, HBO Max, Amazon, and Hulu, have engaged the audience worldwide through numerous TV series, movies, and webseries (Jenner, 2018). As per Netflix's (2021) annual report, nearly 222 million people belonging to more than 190 countries have been watching 140 million hours of TV shows and movies per day. However, limited studies have explored the Pakistani youth's engagement on these platforms. A study revealed that teenagers and adults prefer to consume foreign content mostly endorsed with explicit themes rather than Pakistan's entertainment content (Suleman & Zehra, 2021).

During the past few years, the influx of TV series containing LGBTIQ representation on web streaming channels like Amazon, Disney Plus, HBO Max, Netflix, and Paramount was assessed by GLAAD (2021). According to this report, approximately 637 LGBTIQ characters have been depicted in web streaming series and a major chunk of shows included are Games of Thrones, Pose, The L Word: Generation Q, Sacred Games, Riverdale, Sex Education, Schitt's Creek, The Umbrella Academy, Grey's Anatomy and Dear White People and yet few studies (Hashmi, 2020; Munawar & Siraj, 2022) have highlighted the popularity of these shows among Pakistani youth.

Pakistan is an Islamic country with an established criminalized code of conduct under the legislation to penalize the practice of "unnatural sexual offenses," as prohibited by the Religion and Muslim law (Bello, 2012). People's opinions on the release of Pakistan's first Cannes contender and Queer Palme winner movie "Joyland," were divisive, with the unfavorable majority viewing it as not adhering to Pakistani society's social ideals and moral standards while the favorably inclined views criticized the ban as showing prejudice toward the society's marginalized segment (Guardian, 2022). Different activists opposed the banning of Joyland and



the LGBTIQ community should be regularized, in this regard, Senator Mushtaq Ahmed (member of Jamaat-e-Islami) described Joyland against the Islamic principles (Ali, 2022).

Thus, contrary to Western culture, Asian people usually hold negative and unfavorable attitudes towards non-heterosexual individuals. Also, several studies regarding LGBTIQ and media have been conducted in Western societies, and the majority of empirical studies on this research theme have relied on content analysis (Wall, 2016; Seif, 2017), which only speculates on the possibility that the media may have power on influencing the perception of people regarding LGBTIQ.

Research showed four major themes of learning about LGBTIQ identity, firstly, traditional learning where individuals seek information online through searching and interacting with others through social media platforms. It helps them understand their labels and share experiences while keeping their identity anonymous. However, location on dating apps and social media has now made LGBTIQ communities more visible than in the offline world. The second theme highlights social learning where LGBTIQ individuals observe other's behavior through media platforms and may also participate after noting their peers or LGBTIQ celebrities. Therefore, information is available through videos, podcasts, online questionnaires, and blogs. The third theme talks about experiential learning of LGBTIQ individuals where they share information through anonymous identities which helps them in embracing their self-identity. Moreover, dating apps like Grindr allow them to meet other gay men but people also resist in some cases. Lastly, the LGBTIQ community educates others on this issue through sharing content, providing guidance and social support to others therefore, it becomes easier for the LGBTIQ community to accept the change (Fox & Ralston, 2016).

### **2.2.8. Examining the Act of Criminalization Against the LGBTIQ Community**

Many countries of the world have laws that consider sexual acts with the same sex as criminalized acts however, these words are differently worded as gross indecency, buggery, debauchery, or carnal intercourse against nature and are commonly known as sodomy laws. Countries like Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Maldives consider this subject to criminalization and these offenses are liable to harsh punishment according to the country's laws (Lennox & Waites, 2013; Nicol et al., 2018; Loft et al., 2022; Mugisha, 2019).

Similarly, in Pariaman mayor issued regional regulations against the LGBTIQ community through criminalization. It defines the concept of 'Waria' which means a man who represents the behavior, appearance, and nature of a woman, and every man and woman who has sexual relations with the same gender is prohibited under Article 25 and must be given a penalty of Rp1,000,000 (approximately AUD\$100). However, the LGBTIQ community raised their voice against this act since the government provides equal rights to life and basic freedom without discrimination. People believe that sexual deviations in this community are because of a mental health disorder that has been triggered by the influence of jinn. Likewise, the Qanun Jinayat of Aceh prohibits sexual relations of the same sex which is punishable by a maximum of a hundred lashes, a thousand grams of gold, or a hundred months of jail (Sarbini& Bintang, 2020).

More like other countries, Africa also prohibits the relation of same-sex and criminalized by applying laws and making punishment harsh. This not only criminalizes their whole existence by defining it as an illegal act but nothing could also be done to support them. New offenses include the criminalization of brothels, Nigeria prohibits same-sex marriages and gay clubs, and banning pornography, moreover, Rwanda and Uganda laws also prohibited the LGBTIQ

community whereas in Mozambique, movements were conducted through legalization to decriminalize it (Nicol et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Bhutan criminalizes same-sex relations under section 213 of 2004 and considers it an unnatural act known to be sodomy laws. This offense is punishable by imprisonment of one month to one year (Loft et al., 2022). Whereas laws for the LGBTIQ community in Uganda are still opposing their rights and punishment viable for those who violate is arbitrary arrest and unfair trials (Mugisha, 2019).

Many countries of the world have laws that consider sexual acts with the same sex as criminalized acts however, these words are differently worded as gross indecency, buggery, debauchery, or carnal intercourse against nature. These laws are commonly known as sodomy laws and people who perform such acts are known as Hijra, Kinnar, Kothi, Zananna, Khusra, Queer, Third gender, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Khawaja-Sira. These laws are being imposed because of the serious threat of an increase in HIV cases. Countries like Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, and Maldives consider this subject to criminalization (Lennox & Waites, 2013).

Afghanistan also opposes same-sex relations therefore, under the Afghan Penal Code 2018, it comes under the act of criminalization. Under sections 645, 646, 648, and 649 same sexual relations are illegal, and imprisonment of two years, flogging, or potentially death penalty is also applicable. Azerbaijan also criminalizes homosexual activity so; same-sex marriages are illegal and have no legal protection against discrimination against the LGBTIQ community. Moreover, there is no legal right to change gender further they face discrimination and social stigmas of society (Loft et al., 2022).

Bangladesh also prohibits same-sex relations and considers it as criminalized under section 377 calling it an unnatural offense to have intercourse with an animal or same gender. It is viable to the punishment of life imprisonment. Moreover, LGBTIQ people are lacking security in housing, employment, nationality, and health care services. Turkmenistan also forbids same-sexual relations under Article 135 of the Criminal Code 1997, which is liable to a punishment of 2 years of prison and in case of repetition five to ten years of imprisonment. Furthermore, the country considers homosexuality as a mental disorder under law enforcement, medical institutions, and judicial officials. Furthermore, Uzbekistan has given no legal rights to the LGBTIQ community therefore, they have criminalized same-sex relations under article 120 of the criminal code which charges the punishment of a three-year prison sentence moreover, no protection against any kind of discrimination since it is considered unethical destructing the foundation of society (Loft et al., 2022).

During a press release UNAIDS in 2023 mentioned that the same-sex act has been criminalized in 67 countries from which only 10 countries are imposing the death penalty. Persecution against the LGBT community faced violations of human rights such as extrajudicial massacres, torture, maltreatment, sexual assault, rape, privacy exploitation, and denial of employment and educational opportunities (Nicol et al., 2018). Pakistan has declared the death penalty for people with same-sex relations. The offense of the Zina Ordinance 1979 specified penalties for various acts that consider zina as sexual intercourse outside marriage (Loft et al., 2022).

### **2.2.9. Examining Escalation of HIV Cases in the LGBTIQ Spectrum**

The rise of the LGBT community in Indonesia led to an increase in stigmatization causing a high increase in HIV cases that targets lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

communities. Therefore, an anti-LGBT regional regulation draft was presented by the local government of Depok City moreover, both state and citizens have negative viewpoints regarding the LGBT community which causes a threat to this marginalized community. The influx of HIV cases and alleged acts against religious values and the state's ideology, however, they are given the right to live in Indonesia but that doesn't provide acceptance in society. Furthermore, it has created social disorder and a threat to the country's stability and security since it contradicts Quranic teachings, Hadith, Penal Code, and marriage laws (Sarhini & Bintang, 2019).

HIV is escalating in Pakistan especially in men than women due to sexual activity, contaminated syringes, blood transfusion, and through mother-child contact. However, homosexuality is taboo in Pakistan and considered illegal leading to discrimination, stigmatization, and even prosecution. Since Pakistan is a Muslim-majority state but alone fear of God isn't enough to discourage illicit activities among individuals such as having sex with the same gender. Men who have sex with other men are referred to as MSM which includes Hijras, Zenanas, Chavas, and Maalishias. All these groups are at higher risk of having HIV infection moreover, gay sex is also found among truck drivers, drug users, prisoners, mariners, male prostitutes, migrants, and married men having extramarital affairs (Rajabali et al., 2008; Eaton et al., 2023).

The rise in HIV cases has increased over the years and men are seven times more than women and 7% of them are gay men. Consequently, the fear of getting HIV is a lot in people because of religious and legislative rules (Gadit, 2009). The cases of HIV in Pakistan have been escalating due to sexual minorities that are working as sex workers and many transgenders in Pakistan are sex workers. National report round IV in year 2011 aimed to highlight HIV/AIDS prevalence which showed about 7.2% is due to hijra sex workers in Larkana with 14.9% and

Karachi with 12% highest number of cases. Moreover, it showed mostly they start such work at the age of 16 and serve almost 40 clients per month. The knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases was present among them about 90.9% knew about HIV/AIDs (Aurat Foundation, 2016).

#### **2.2.10. Analyzing Decriminalization of the LGBTIQ Community**

Social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community has intensified over the years due to which people considered it legal, decriminalized it, and gave equal access to rights and protection to LGBTIQ individuals. Countries like India, Sri Lanka, Armenia, Mozambique, and Bangladesh are working on decriminalization processes of the LGBTIQ community promoting LGBTIQ rights (Vanita, 2004; Baudh, 2013; Mugisha, 2019; Cottet & Picq, 2019; Loft et al., 2022).

Over several years, European countries started the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community by giving them rights and responsibilities. Now they have opportunities to formally register their marriage and can live together as same-sex couples. Moreover, this act is implemented at the national level along with international human rights and the European Union accepted their status. The period of the 1970s showed an increased rate of divorce due to changes in liberated laws reforms (Digoix, 2020).

India has challenged criminalization through the involvement of the Delhi high court highlighting the rights of human dignity therefore, they raised the matter sex is not a dirty thing and a personal choice of everyone which shouldn't be other people's matter to discuss. If there is a violation of privacy it is a violation of human dignity therefore, article 21 of the Indian constitution provides the right to life and personal liberty, moreover, article 15 states the prohibition of discrimination. Therefore, later after many integrated efforts, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated that being different or deviant is inclusive rather than ostracized (Baudh, 2013). Whereas the Indian government declared gay sex no longer a criminal offense later in

2021, governmental reforms were presented on LGBTIQ rights by providing them equal employment opportunities, protection, education, and health facilities (Loft et al., 2022).

India's unanimous decision on unban of gay sex in 2018 became a huge achievement for LGBTIQ community rights however, this doesn't give them full freedom or equal rights to other citizens (Mugisha, 2019). They are still under the threat of being harassed, rejection, and shame for being who they are. Court defines that it is the responsibility of the Indian government to shun forced arranged marriages of children so, LGBTIQ people shouldn't go through traumatic experiences against their will and also end shocking practices of corrective rape. Therefore, the LGBTIQ community is the victim of violence, forced evictions, and social exclusion. British government advocates the decriminalization of LGBT relations in former colonies but solely statements are not enough. Nowadays commonwealth countries and the British government are actively working to end homophobia (Mugisha, 2019; Loft et al.,2022).

Relationships among the same sex have been a controversy for centuries among Indians. It was debated that Foucault and his followers were wrong about the emergence of same-sex relationships however, it was started in ancient and medieval Indian texts. In modern homophobia, the word homosexuality in India was more emphasizing sex rather than love but, both cross-sex and same-sex marriages are based on love, commitment from which only sexual desire is one aspect. In most of India, homosexuals are secretly married to each other while married to the opposite sex at the same time to be accepted in society. Whereas marrying secretly of their own choice lets them live in love (Vanita, 2004).

Many NGOs in Sri Lanka are working for decriminalization processes of the LGBTIQ community promoting human rights, LGBT rights, and women's rights. Moreover, focusing on HIV/AIDs cases is linked to criminalization as there are no specific laws to control the spread of

the virus. However, the Penal Code of Sri Lanka still criminalizes homosexuality, carnal intercourse against nature, and gross acts of indecency. Moreover, these laws were implemented to protect from HIV/AIDs and other STIs. Different women support groups are trying to decriminalize sexual relationships moreover, the attitude of people toward homosexuality is now changing however, to decriminalize this legal intervention is required (Baudh, 2013).

Bangladesh has been trying to decriminalize homosexuality in the commonwealth through queer movements therefore, a coalition among activist groups across Commonwealth for which around £5.6 million funds would be advocated for supporting LGBTIQ+, women, and children's rights (Cottet & Picq, 2019). Whereas homosexual activity in Armenia has been considered legal since 2003 however, there is no legal protection against discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people. There is a legal right to change gender in Armenia, so surgery is not required for that whereas same-sex marriages are not recognized because marriage is considered a union between male and female hence same-sex marriage laws were not implemented (Loftet al., 2022).

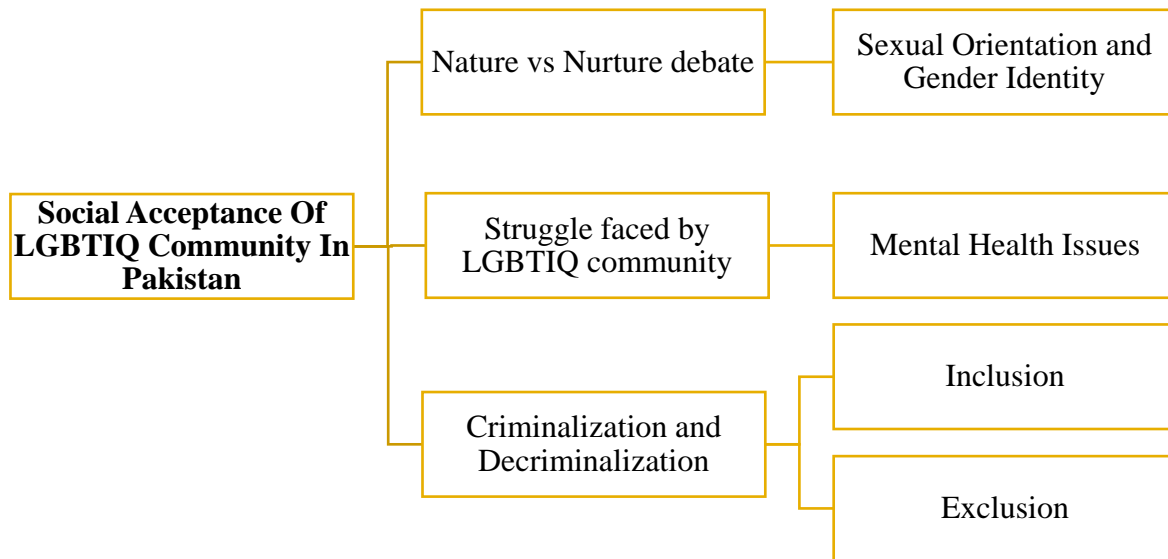
During the interviews with the Pakistani audience, the idea of decriminalization of mostly opposed. However, some of the population agreed to this notion as Summer (Pakistani Muslim Queer, a Lahore-based Activist) initially opposed the idea but as the interview proceeded, she supported the narrative that queer people are free, and we should empower them through a proper law. The idea of a decriminalization campaign is not fascinating because it will require ten years of strategy since it needs to cover family, community, religious, and patriarchal issues for proper implementation of decriminalization. Therefore, tackling Islam and patriarchy is foremost important. Furthermore, the Supreme Court of Islamabad ordered that trans people



should receive equal rights of support and protection from the government of Pakistan, but no proper initiative of decriminalization is acted upon (Baudh, 2013).

The notion of decriminalization has its own facets helping this community gain acceptance and equal rights like all other human beings therefore, countries have highlighted it under the issue of human rights however, this community in Pakistan is still in the pipeline.

### 2.3. Conceptual Framework



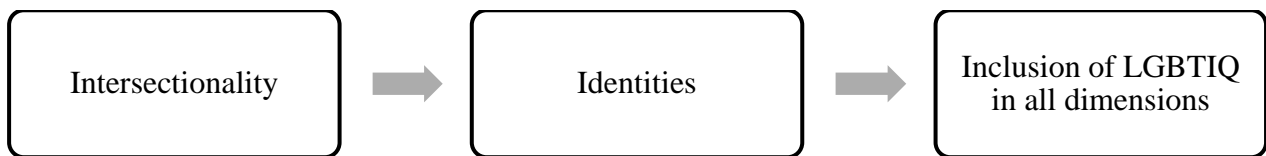
*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*

## 2.4. Theoretical Framework

This research has been informed by several theories covering aspects of social acceptance of LGBTIQ. Primarily, the study entails Meyer’s minority stress theory and intersectionality theory as core theories that build a strong argument regarding LGBTIQ identities. Over the years third and fourth waves of feminism fought against the notion of sexism, workplace harassment, and power dynamics. In this regard, African-American feminists have contributed to highlighting women’s experiences, emphasizing multicultural, global, and non-heteronormative identities through the idea of intersectionality. Therefore, women of every color, lesbian, gay, and transgender are to be given equal rights (Tyson, 2023).

### 1. Intersectionality Theory

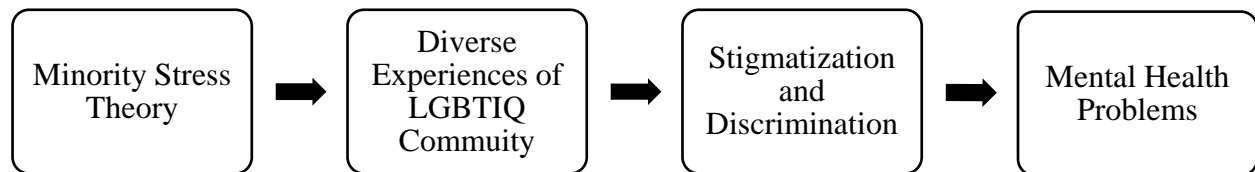
Intersectionality is a theoretical framework presented by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, that examines the intersections and interactions between an individual's social identities and experiences within social structures and institutions. Moreover, social institutions play a significant role in shaping power dynamics and identity processes. In the context of the LGBTIQ community, social institutions can perpetuate systems of privilege and marginalization. Allen (2007) emphasized the importance of legal protection for LGBTIQ families to safeguard civil rights and the need for family policies to address challenges and promote empathy. Intersectionality can help understand how LGBTIQ individuals are affected by other forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and stigmatization (Few-Demo et al., 2016).



*Figure 2: Theoretical Model of Intersectionality Theory*

## 2. Minority Stress Theory

Dr. Illan Meyer in 1995 presented Meyer's minority stress theory explains the chronic stress and diverse experiences faced by LGBTIQ individuals due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Advocacy, education, and research have increased the acceptance of LGBTIQ individuals in recent years, but stigmatization and discrimination still lead to higher rates of suicide among them. therefore, mental health was prioritized which can be affected by internal and external stressors, such as family rejection, unemployment, heteronormative cultural practices, and lack of political participation, resulting in mood disorders, PTSD, depression, anxiety, drug abuse, and alcohol consumption. Therefore, it is essential to create an inclusive healthcare environment, educate the masses, establish anti-discriminatory policies, use appropriate language, and provide athletic training irrespective of sexual orientation and gender identity(Quinn, 2020).



*Figure 3: Theoretical Model of Minority Stress Theory*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The previous chapter focused on the literature review, conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. This present chapter focuses on the methodological procedures carried out in this research study. This research is qualitative concerning the social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan. A deeper understanding of sexual minorities is required through methods of qualitative research. The forthcoming section of this chapter defines the methodological steps in detail.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The research study was a qualitative approach in nature to explore the perception of deeper knowledge and understanding of youth regarding the social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community. The qualitative approach helps in understanding the pattern of individual experiences, perspectives, and behavior in any specific context (Tenny et al., 2017). The purpose of integrating the qualitative approach was to gain insight and knowledge regarding cultural and religious values with regard to this community among different respondents of various age groups and residential backgrounds. Moreover, the limited literature on the criminalization and decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community in the context of Pakistan has developed the need to focus on qualitative discourse and to highlight the subjective and personal attitudes of respondents.

#### **3.2. Universe**

The locale of the study was Islamabad, which is the capital of Pakistan established in 1960. It is situated against the backdrop of Margalla hills, nine miles northeast of Rawalpindi.

Islamabad is a well-designed and established city in Pakistan with almost 1.2 million people residing in its luxurious, popular landmarks covered with greenery and modern developments to ensure a deluxe lifestyle. The town planning of Islamabad comes under the responsibility of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) which executed societies in the form of different sectors. It is further divided into different sectors that are sector D, E, F, G, H, and I, and further divided into subsectors. Moreover, the city is also divided into five major zones: Zone I, Zone II, Zone III, Zone IV, and Zone V (Maham, 2021).

The locale of my research was focused on two Universities in Islamabad. One of the renowned universities was Bahria University located at sector E-8/1, Shangrilla Road, Islamabad which is a semi-government university. The second honorable institute taken was the International Islamic University located in sector H-10 which is a public sector university (Maham, 2021). Here, Bahria University was assigned as university 'A' and International Islamic University was categorized as university 'B'.

### **3.3. Sampling Strategy**

The type of sampling method which was utilized in this study was non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling was considered an appropriate technique to conduct qualitative studies. It is a method using non-randomized methods to draw a sample and involves the judgment of the researcher by selecting respondents who are easily available (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). In Non-Probability Sampling, every member of the population does not have an equal chance to be part of the study, and only certain respondents were selected from a larger population. Furthermore, non-probability sampling seemed to be useful for exploratory studies to

explore the perception of youth regarding the social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community with reference to criminalization and decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community.

The consecutive sampling technique was used for the selection of the participants required for the research. Consecutive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling including all people who meet the inclusion criteria and are conveniently available. Researchers conduct research one after the other until reach a conclusive result (Longe, 2022).

The requirement of a sample size to achieve the saturation point of the data in qualitative research depends on different parameters such as the area of the study, the demographic profile of respondents, and empirical questions (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The sample size of this research consists of 20 respondents segregated into 2 groups consisting of 11 female and 09 male respondents from Islamabad, Pakistan, who were studying in university and were easily accessible aged between 20 to 27 years old, irrespective of their socio-economic background and educational background.

### **3.4. Population Frame**

The population frame of the study consists of the youth of Islamabad. Interviews with 11 young female and 09 male respondents were conducted, belonging to two different universities in Islamabad. The age groups of the respondents which was categorized into various brackets (2-year intervals) of age bracket of 22-23 years old; 40 percent were 24-25 years old; 10 percent of the respondents were of age 26-27 years old, and 5 percent were 20-21 years old. The age groups were developed in accordance with Sigmund Freud's 5 stages of personality development to analyze that it is quite fascinating that the current study had captured various

respondents of different ages with diverse perspectives regarding the LGBTIQ community's social acceptance.

### **3.5. Tool and Methods of Data Collection**

#### **3.5.1. Methods of Data Collection**

The data for this present study was collected with the help of an interview guide (concerning major research questions on the basis of the research objectives). The interview guide consisted of six major segments and each segment had further divided questions (comprising open-ended questions). The duration of the interviews was between 20 minutes to 45 minutes. The probing technique was an integral part of the interview question. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and interviews were recorded and transcribed. Respondents were informed about the audio recording of interviews beforehand; moreover, consent was taken from each respondent. Although respondents were hesitant to talk on this sensitive topic, therefore, it required much more effort to convince them.

Qualitative data collection and techniques were utilized for the collection of data for the study. Therefore, Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with the help of an interview guide. Semi-structured in-depth interviews consisted of specific information allowing individuals to describe specific experiences (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). The primary source for data collection was in-depth interviews conducted in person whereas the secondary data source for data collection was factual information from the internet. The data was collected within 2 months (July 2023 to August 2023) from Bahria University and International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.



### **3.5.2. Data Analysis Type and Technique**

This study was exploratory in nature where the perception of youth was explored regarding social acceptance of LGBTIQ individuals and how it impacts the gender identity of the youth of Islamabad. The collected data was analyzed through the thematic analysis technique. As researchers in qualitative research methods integrate thematic analysis technique to organize and analyze complex data (Dawadi, 2021). The thematic analysis technique is a method recommended by Braun and Clarke in 2006, used in evaluating qualitative data through the process of all the six major steps identifying (familiarization of data), coding, analyzing, constructing, and reviewing themes. Initial codes were generated into meaningful segments which are analyzed further. Those themes further explored the opinion of the respondents on a particular issue determining the results of the study (Braun & Clark, 2012).

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

All ethical considerations of social research were also undertaken. Field ethics and guidelines were followed such as data collected after obtaining the youth's consent. The participation of the respondents was voluntary, and privacy and confidentiality were ensured. Consent should be voluntary, which means the participant either decides to be part of the study or declines it. After the provision of written consent to participants, it was necessary to explain individually the need and purpose of the study. The identity of participants must not be revealed while reporting the study (Arifin, 2018; BERA, 2018). Moreover, the anonymity of the respondents was maintained as pseudonyms were adopted in this regard. Moreover, all the interviews were recorded with the respondent's consent through an audio recorder that helped the

researcher prevent the omission of key information. Also, recorded data was easier to transcribe for analysis. No respondents were harmed in any way.

### **3.7. Field Experience**

This current research holds a special place in my heart as I have always been interested in examining Pakistan's cultural and social norms and how our indigenous values are affected by different Western ideologies. The notion of the LGBTIQ community is an alienated concept for Pakistani society therefore, it has intrigued me to study and understand the perspective of youth which is the future of Pakistan regarding this community. Being a researcher, I was thoughtful about the religious and cultural beliefs of Pakistan which do not align with the values of the LGBTIQ community. Prominently, young respondents hold differences of opinion regarding the experiences and perspectives towards this community forming a stance of inclusivity and exclusivity of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan.

Initially, at the early stages of my research when I expressed my thoughts with my family and friends, they felt bizarre about this as it is an estranged concept for them since the ideology of the LGBTIQ community is against the cultural and religious beliefs of Pakistan. But with time, when I explained the importance of highlighting such issues, if neglected can be problematic in the future. Subsequently, everyone started appreciating my work because of its uniqueness and exclusivity of the topic. Also, my close friends praised me and supported my work.

During the data collection, firstly I did rapport building to make respondents comfortable then with the help of an interview guide which included open-ended questions that

allowed participants to express their perspectives, feelings, experiences, and thoughts regarding the acceptability and unacceptability of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan. Several respondents showed hesitation and reluctance in sharing their viewpoint on this sensitive topic meanwhile most of the respondents admired my work because of the distinctiveness of the subject moreover, they appreciated the interview guide comprising detailed and crispy questions and praised me for highlighting the new concept in Pakistan. Moreover, I observed that male respondents were more comfortable in sharing their viewpoint, also they explicitly bashed this community whereas female respondents were hesitant to speak on such controversial topics and they shared less harsh opinions towards this community. Although the perspective of every respondent is subjective in nature, therefore, every opinion matters irrespective of their stance, age, residential background, level of education, and gender.

I have tried my best to incorporate the standpoint of young respondents in analyzing the purpose of the study. I have attempted to be unbiased in all the circumstances and also integrated the objective opinions of the young respondents towards the LGBTIQ community keeping the cultural, moral, and religious ideologies of Pakistan in mind. The culture of Pakistan is charismatic for its uniqueness which is truly remarkable therefore, the estranged concepts required a detailed study highlighting the indigenous and new Westernized concepts in traditional societies like Pakistan.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter four of this thesis entails the detailed analysis of data collected during interviews to interpret the perspective of youth on social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community with other variables. Data has been collected from 20 respondents from two universities of Islamabad, Bahria University, and International Islamic University. Further, respondents were divided into 11 females and 09 males. The following discussion and verbatims used in the data analysis chapter are taken from interviews which were transcribed and analyzed later. All the respondents have been given pseudonyms to keep their privacy and consent taken during interviews. Moreover, data has been analyzed further in the form of themes by using the thematic analysis technique which resulted in seven themes covering major points of this research.

In this chapter, I have endeavored to summarize the perspective of youth regarding social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan under the following meaningful themes:

- 4.1. Beyond Labels: Navigating Identities and Decrypting Transgender Bill.
- 4.2. Empowering Diversity: The Movements Paving the Path of Inclusivity.
- 4.3. The Catalyst of Change from Pixels to Pages.
- 4.4. Spectrum of Love: Contravene Cultural Notions.
- 4.5. Breaking Barriers: Exploring The Intersection of Religion and LGBTIQ Community.
- 4.6. Shedding Light on Unveiling Realities: Complex Nexus of HIV and Mental Health Cases Regarding LGBTIQ Community.
- 4.7. Shifting Dynamics: Criminalization and Decriminalization Outlooks.

**Table 4.1***Socioeconomic and Demographic Profile of The Respondents*

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Program Enrolled in</b>	<b>Family Structure</b>
1.	Rabia	22	Female	Gilgit	16 <sup>th</sup> year	BBA	Nuclear
2.	Zara	21	Female	Rawalpindi	15 <sup>th</sup> year	Psychology	Nuclear
3.	Hajra	22	Female	Rawalpindi	14 <sup>th</sup> year	Media- Studies	Nuclear
4.	Shehryar	24	Male	Balochistan	17 <sup>th</sup> year	IR	Joint
5.	Nabila	22	Female	Swat	15 <sup>th</sup> year	IR	Nuclear
6.	Kainat	22	Female	Rawalpindi	16 <sup>th</sup> year	DS	Joint
7.	Minal	22	Female	Islamabad	16 <sup>th</sup> year	DS	Nuclear
8.	Zaroon	23	Male	Rawalpindi	16 <sup>th</sup> year	DS	Nuclear
9.	Ali	24	Male	Kashmir	16 <sup>th</sup> year	DS	Joint
10.	Mahnoor	26	Female	Rawalpindi	17 <sup>th</sup> year	IR	Extended
11.	Ahmad	22	Male	Swabi	15 <sup>th</sup> year	LLB	Nuclear
12.	Qasim	23	Male	Swabi	15 <sup>th</sup> year	IT	Joint
13.	Rayyan	23	Male	Bannu	15 <sup>th</sup> year	LLB	Nuclear
14.	Ibrahim	25	Male	Hangu	15 <sup>th</sup> year	LLB	Joint
15.	Haider	24	Male	Peshawar	16 <sup>th</sup> year	IR	Nuclear
16.	Noor	24	Female	Islamabad	17 <sup>th</sup> year	MBA	Nuclear
17.	Maira	24	Female	Multan	16 <sup>th</sup> year	IR	Joint

18.	Osama	24	Male	Gilgit	14 <sup>th</sup> year	IT	Joint
19.	Momina	27	Female	Kashmir	14 <sup>th</sup> year	Psychology	Nuclear
20.	Natasha	24	Female	Hyderabad	18 <sup>th</sup> year	MBA	Nuclear

The demographic profile of participants plays a crucial role in understanding the perspective of young respondents and interpreting research findings regarding the social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community in Islamabad, Pakistan. Table 4.1 illustrates the detailed profile of 20 respondents (youth of Islamabad with pseudonyms) along with other demographics such as age, gender, education (years, program enrolled in), birthplace, and family structure. Furthermore, I have analyzed the above-mentioned demographic variables in various separate tables indicating frequency distribution to have a deeper knowledge of background variables for the youth of Islamabad.

#### **Table 4.2**

##### *Age of the Respondents*

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	20-21	1	5
2.	22-23	9	45
3.	24-25	8	40
4.	26-27	2	10
	Total	20	100

*Source:* Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

In this research, the age of the respondents is one of the important variables in understanding the overall orientation of reality shared by the respondents. It assists in analyzing the perception and understanding of social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community. In the existing study, the factor of age shows the difference of opinion and experience regarding the LGBTIQ community's role in society and identifies different cultural and religious notions promoted or violated by this community. Table 4.2 indicates the age of respondents which I have further categorized into various brackets (2 years intervals) which shows the minimum age of my respondents started from 20 years whereas the maximum age limit of the respondents was 27 years. The majority (45 percent) fall in the bracket of 22-23 years old; 40 percent were 24-25 years old; 10 percent of the respondents were of age 26-27 years old, and 5 percent were 20-21 years old. It is quite fascinating that the current study has captured various respondents of different ages with diverse perspectives regarding the LGBTIQ community's social acceptance.

**Table 4.3**

*Gender of the Respondents*

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Female	11	55
2.	Male	9	45
	Total	20	100

*Source:* Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.3 highlights the gender of my respondents which is divided into two categories male and female. The majority 55 percent of the respondents were female whereas 45 percent of the respondents were male. This categorization further showed the contrasting judgment of both

genders in terms of the trends of social acceptability and unacceptability of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan.

**Table 4.4**

*Educational Attainment of The Respondents*

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Educational Attainment in Completed Years</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	14 <sup>th</sup> year	3	15
2.	15 <sup>th</sup> year	6	30
3.	16 <sup>th</sup> year	7	35
4.	17 <sup>th</sup> year	3	15
5.	18 <sup>th</sup> year	1	5
	Total	20	100

*Source:* Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.4 illustrates the educational attainment in completed years in which the majority respondents of 35 percent completed their 16<sup>th</sup> years of education, 30 percent of the respondents completed their 15<sup>th</sup> years of education, 15 percent of the respondents completed their 14<sup>th</sup> years of education, 15 percent of the respondents completed their 17<sup>th</sup> years of education and 5 percent of the respondents completed 18<sup>th</sup> years of education. Hence, all the respondents taken for the interviews were highly educated with at least a bachelor’s or master’s degree enrolled in different academic programs which showed diverse opinions on this subject.



**Table 4.5**

*Program In Which Respondents Were Enrolled In.*

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Education (Subjects)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	BBA	1	5
2.	Psychology	2	10
3.	Media Studies	1	5
4.	International Relations	5	25
5.	Development Studies	4	20
6.	Law	3	15
7.	MBA	2	10
8.	Information Technology	2	10
	Total	20	100

*Source:* Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.5 explains the educational attainment of the respondents in terms of the program they are currently enrolled in which is evident for my study to explore the narrative of youth regarding the LGBTIQ community and how their educational background affects their opinion. The majority 25 percent of the respondents were from the International Relations department, 20 percent of the respondents were from Development Studies, 15 percent of the respondents were from LLB, 10 percent of the respondents were from MBA, 10 percent of the respondents were from Information Technology, 10 percent of the respondents were from Psychology, 5 percent of the respondents were from BBA and 5 percent of the respondents were from Media Studies. Consequently, the different academic programs provided extensive insight and knowledge on this subject.

**Table 4.6**

*Family Structure of the Respondents*

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Family structure</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Nuclear	12	60
2.	Joint	9	45
3.	Extended	1	5
	Total	20	100

Source: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.6 reflects the family structure of respondents in which results showed that the majority 60 percent of the respondents were living in a nuclear family system, whereas 45 percent were living in a joint family system and only 5 percent of the respondents were living in an extended family system.

Hence the extensive exploration of the aforementioned variables has been intricately outlined in the form of comprehensive tables. Consequently, an in-depth exploration of the data was required to understand the perspective of young respondents, therefore, imperative subsequent themes have been formed.

**4.1. Beyond Labels: Navigating Identities and Decrypting Transgender Bill**

The emergence of the LGBTIQ community is an alienated concept for the people of Pakistan because this is something exceptionable and perplexing due to its ideology against moral, cultural, and religious values. Intersex individuals are born with natural bodily variations (Rashid & Rashid, 2022; Morrison, 2022) and have always been a part of every society since

they are born with such complications which is not their fault moreover, they also gained people's acceptance whereas transgender is an umbrella term representing every individual with different gender identity and sexual orientation then assigned at birth (Alam et al., 2019). Moreover, transgender people on purpose change their gender according to their feelings or desires they have for a specific gender for example, if a female feels like a male she converts herself into a male based on certain feelings. However, people misunderstand the terminology of intersex with transgender due to a lack of awareness, misinformation, insufficient ways of learning, and inadequate knowledge.

Aurat Foundation with the help of USAID (2016) conducted a research study that vindicated that South Asian Culture has misinterpreted these terminologies such as the term transgender in South-Asian culture has its own meaning and is frequently interpreted as 'Hijra' or 'Khawaja Sira'. This term generally assumed as all intersex and trans people come under this term where they justify it as being born with alternative genitals, therefore, a misleading narrative in Pakistani society has been developed that transgenders or trans people are called hijras and all hijras are born intersex (Aurat Foundation, 2016).

The true interpretation of this is that intersex people have biological variation in genitals by birth whereas transgender is something related to gender identity where people associate certain personal identities as per their liking (Rashid & Rashid, 2022; Morrison, 2022). Therefore, the general understanding regarding the LGBTIQ community has been prevailing among people; however, the two misunderstood categories especially in the context of Pakistan have been observed during the data collection.

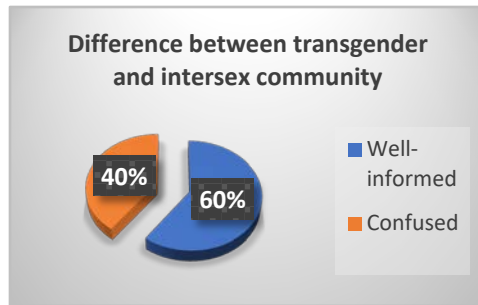


Figure 4 shows the understanding of the respondents regarding the terms Transgender and Intersex.

All the respondents were highly educated and enrolled in universities, so the results generated were that 60% of the respondents had a clear idea regarding the difference between transgender and intersex whereas 40% of the population didn't know the difference and they thought transgender are the one with biological problems. However, this information doesn't justify the whole population's understanding, but my study entails the above-mentioned results.

The term intersex and transgender has been synonymously used by people and in literature as well. Therefore, this dichotomy needs to be analyzed. In this aspect, respondent Eleven shared his knowledge:

*Well, basically the thing is that transgenders which I think is that they have some sort of chromosomal abnormality or which they have both the genes and behaviors of male and female so, that is by birth, and I think the intersex is something which we think, which we identify as like that is kind of subjective so, that's my understanding on it (PersonalCommunication,at University A, 28-7-2023).*

The culture of self-perceived identities is not prevalent in Pakistan since it is something estranged from Pakistan's societal, cultural, and religious norms. People living abroad might be more well-informed regarding the interpretation of such terminologies. Since the concept of

these terminologies has been taken from Western culture as Jabbar (2020), highlighted these definitions were also used in transgender bill which are closely related to Western terms or Western sexual categorization which are merely a local expression or understanding that signifies the coloniality of transgender identity. Similarly, respondent Sixteen shared his confusion that:

*Transgenders are those that are born with that identity, we're not sure whether they identify themselves as male or female. Intersex refers to those individuals who are born with a defined identity as either a male or a female but with time they do not identify themselves as a female or they do not have those emotions or those feelings that a female might have or a male might have and then they eventually change themselves, so they start identifying themselves as a different gender altogether (Personal Communication, at University B, 18-8-2023).*

With the passage of time and context, people added more terms to what they perceived their introspection as due to which the terminology LGBTIQ hasn't stopped her therefore, more additional terminologies and plus categories have been incorporated. The plus sign in this acronym represents the other diverse sexual orientations, gender expression, gender identity, and sexual characteristics in individuals who identify themselves in these categories (Morrison, 2022). Relatedly, respondent Nine specified his understanding of this subject as:

*Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, IQs, I don't know. They'll keep adding letters, don't worry about it. Basically, transgender you know, historically what we know of transgender is that they have female and male genitals; now intersex, it's a new sort of definition. You can also find historical definitions of it that people have different sex interests and stuff like that, but I think, you know, if you keep it simple, it's kind of the same, to be honest. It's basically the*

*misconception that it's been created now, I mean can you define a woman now in the West? It's the terms that we have started to define differently I think I keep it simple transgender for me is a person who has female and male genitals and intersex is the same for me (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).*

Subsequently, such terminologies keep on adding due to which people fear to define a newborn with one definite identity. From the very beginning, ancestors passed only the knowledge regarding two genders, male and female later on people tried understanding it after knowing through friends and social media due to which people started exploring their own identities in which they didn't feel comfortable anymore. Moreover, Netflix has engaged the audience worldwide through numerous TV series, movies, and web series (Jenner, 2018). Respondent Six in this aspect shared her narrative as:

*Culturally, if you look at it, growing up, we have been told that there are only two genders, male and female and then we have been told about intersex. We were always under the misconception that transgenders and intersex are the same thing, so we were always told that it is transgender but now, as we are growing, we are learning, and we know that there are two separate things. So intersex is because it is what has been given by Allah, that is what we believe in and that really impacts our religious beliefs (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).*

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is the era of digitalization and modernization which has brought new ways of life where people have more freedom of speech, and freedom to live the way they want and do whatever they want to therefore, it is also important for people to have understanding regarding the recent issues, new terminologies because it's the matter of time when people will

also claim it in Pakistan about such rights for self-perceived identities. About sixty percent of the respondents were aware of all the terminologies so definitely this is becoming part of Pakistani society somehow. In this context, the respondent Ten added her perspective to this debate as:

*Intersex is something like a biological term, it is a form where a person by the will of Allah or by birth, does not have any control and has both male and female organs like they are going to have uterus and testes. Now it depends on an individual whether their uterus or female reproductive side is more dominant or their male side is more dominant. And these are the terms, in the common language, we call intersex as Khusra or KhawajaSira. Whereas transgender is something different, trans means transformation, and gender means your identity because gender is something that is stereotypical. Now if a person is born male completely with all the male organs, like they are designated as male, XY chromosome but after some time they feel like they are not male and they want to change their gender to a female and turn their whole natural body to something else is transgender (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).*

This debate eventually became a heated controversy because of the transgender bill that was passed in 2018 which was supposedly introduced to give equal rights and opportunities to transgender people. As Islam (2020) in a study stated that in 2018, the government of Pakistan in parliament passed the transgender bill which aimed to provide rights to everyone under the terminology transgender, they included intersex individuals, eunuchs, trans men, trans women, Khawaja Sira, and everyone else under the term of self-perceived identity. So, they highlighted that transgender should be given equal rights such as the right to education, the use of appropriate pronouns for them, equal opportunities, citizenship, and identity with all governmental departments like NADRA. But the question that was raised by the masses was that it gave room to everyone with a self-perceived identity to claim their rights. Therefore, the issue

of promoting the LGBTIQ community through the parliamentary bill gained a lot of hype on social media as people believed that the bill in disguise was trying to help all other diverse gender identities by using the name of intersex people. Moreover, some people believed that the government of Pakistan itself was confused regarding the terminology intersex and transgender therefore, this bill was a huge debate, but few claimed that they did it on purpose to help other communities as respondent Nine shared his perspective that:

*To be honest, if it was just a protection right as they say that it's a bill to protect the rights if it was just, it could have been narrated or phrased better, you did not have to use the self-perceived identity words which have general meanings to the public. You might have a different meaning or definition of a self-perceived identity, but the West has gone completely different in those definitions and there is just it's just a matter of time before you start adopting those definitions in Pakistan and bills like that which are using those words, they are opening doors to that. If it was about equal rights and access to resources, you could use the access to resources phrase in that and every problem would be just avoided but you went out to use self-perceived identity so, there is a deeper agenda to it then we can see (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).*

Subsequently, the bill had many loopholes, which is why the bill couldn't be passed and was dismissed later on. But still today people mention that bill as an issue to violation of rights of common masses and especially of the intersex community. Jabbar (2020), highlighted that the terminology in the bill was taken from Western society as the term transgender in the bill referred to multiple terms such as intersex having a mixture of both male and female genital, Eunuch as a person assigned with a certain sex at birth but undergoes any surgery to change that, and trans men, women or Khawaja Sira are people having gender identity which differs from



cultural and societal norms. Concerning this matter, respondent Fourteen expressed his viewpoint as:

*There is a huge misconception in Pakistan that people think intersex are transgenders and it was a violation in disguise as they were using the name intersex just to protect other people that is a disgrace and a very sad moment for intersex as they are using your name, perception, and faces to protect other people. I think that bill hasn't been converted into an act because it was a violation of the Islamic Republic laws in Pakistan (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

Moreover, the bill was criticized by Islamic groups and parties in Pakistan likewise, Ahmad (2020), in his research mentioned that the bill was highlighted among the masses because of its stance on homosexual rights however, the transgender community claimed it was false information spread about the bill and labeled it for those who are struggling for separate identity as transgender but labeled as homosexuals. Moreover, religious parties also criticized it as a promotion of homosexuality and Jamaat-e-Islami senator Mushtaq Ahmed projected it necessary to have a medical certificate for registration of trans people in NADRA, and head of PDM Maulana Fazal u Rahman called this bill a rebellion against the Quran and Sunnah. In this aspect, respondent Ten specified her viewpoint:

*Well, I have read the bill and they have mentioned XXY chromosome stuff too but there was a loophole in that bill, first, they have written the broad term transgender, and then under the clauses which are explaining that term intersex so, they clearly know that transgender is a broad term and intersex is something else, but they have mixed up in such a confusing way at legislative institutions if they had said Khawaja-Sira rights or intersex rights so that bill would have been accepted openly because no sane person would say that these people who have this*

*inborn disease should be treated in that way* (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).

In May 2018, the Pakistani government passed the Transgender Persons Act for the protection of their rights and to address other problems (Jaffar, et al., 2020). However, the confusion among people and government officials regarding the transgender bill highlighted the misinterpretation of terminologies. So, the confusion didn't remain only within the masses either literate or illiterate but unfortunately, the government officials sitting in the higher posts didn't even know the basis of these terminologies which created turmoil among the masses. One good thing that resulted after this bill was that people who didn't know about intersex and were considering them as transgender did their research and now are well aware of this subject. In this regard, respondent Fifteen said:

*As I said before our officials belong to the maulvi community, so they are against it, but they were mainly involved in passing this bill without informing the public because before the public knew this bill was passed there was a lot of backlash. Actually, deep down it goes that no one is a saint if we think that our officials are saints and they are properly straight although they are more involved in such problems than us as we don't know what is happening behind the hotel, behind parliament lodges, everything happens behind the hotel's door and they are involved in that stuff* (Personal Communication, at University A, 3-8-2023).

In order to resolve this issue since the masses were furious about such an imprudent act of government, the government of Pakistan didn't pass the bill however, the intersex community is still striving for their rights as they are the ones who actually deserve equal citizenship and rights. As Loft et al., (2022) in his study mentioned the government of Pakistan claimed the provision of rights to these people as all the years of ultimate struggle rights for transgender are

fully given as they are issued national IDs, passports, driver's licenses, medical care, rights to vote, employment opportunities, and prohibits discrimination at school, work, or public places. Conversely, due to the mishap of this bill, their rights were also suppressed. Respondent Nineteen mentioned this aspect:

*The bill was like a blessing in disguise for these individuals because the government officials and all other people who are indulged in this bill said that no, this bill was for the trans community when even they didn't know what trans is or what intersex is, so it was kind of a disguised things when they tried to promote the rights of other sexual oriented people rather than providing rights to the intersex community (Personal Communication, at University B, 30-8-2023).*

The rise of this community has become an alarming situation since people aren't aware of such terminologies and all other categories are now being incorporated into everyday use which highlights that this concept is no longer an estranged notion, especially for the youth of Pakistan. However, the misunderstanding of the terminology lasted as respondents continued to use the word transgender when referring to intersex individuals, and whenever they realized their mistake, eventually they apologized and said it was an intersex community. Therefore, people need awareness because the medium of knowledge they are using doesn't provide them with in-depth knowledge. Similarly, bills like the transgender bill are something to be taken critically and seriously therefore proper knowledge to government officials should be given so, that no similar mistake to be made in the future.

#### **4.2. Empowering Diversity: The Movements Paving the Path of Inclusivity**

The recent indigenous, national, and international movements and various organizations like feminist movements, NGOs, INGOs, and human rights agencies are bridging the

empowerment of minority communities in Pakistan. Similarly, Tyson (2023) and Loft et al.(2022) in their studies mentioned movements to assist the LGBTIQ community in gaining acceptance. It was stated that feminist movements are focusing on highlighting sex, gender, and sexuality rather than focusing on traditional definitions. Moreover, it emphasized on escalation of feminist movements (Aurat March) as a pivotal role in the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community and now is playing a front role.

For decades Aurat March has been playing a huge role in fighting for women's rights however, over the years the influx of women's marches has incorporated other dimensions which somehow taken away the prime key role of feminist movements (Farhat et al., 2020). Aurat March was meant to work on the provision of equal rights to vulnerable women who are facing discrimination, violence, and inequality. Conversely, the debate didn't stop here as now a new agenda of accepting the LGBTIQ community through the Aurat March has been in the limelight. In this context, respondent Nine shared his views:

*I think one of the biggest concerns for women right now is the sort of modern feminism that we have I think, women could do a lot better if they idealize Fatima Jinnah, Benazir Bhutto, Arfa Karim, and women like those who stood up for themselves and faced everything with honor, but the modern feminism are using petty slogans, the petty issues that they have. I think they have actually done a great job in undermining the true essence of feminism and they have taken a lot away from women (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).*

Over the years, women movements have transformed in confronting social, economic, political and cultural differences against marginalized women (Batool, 2022). The agenda of the Aurat March has gone through several stages from the rights of women to the rights of all other

inclusive genders. Not only this helped liberal women to associate their problems which are not even encountered by vulnerable women. Moreover, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people under the name of women and intersex rights are liberating their agendas. During an interview respondent Sixteen highlighted the dilemma that is:

*Aurat March, at the beginning, was for the underprivileged women in Pakistan who had no voice but with time, the Aurat March has become an agenda for privileged females or elitist women who just want to put out their own agendas and are following the Western culture because LGBTIQ started from the west. It is nowhere close to our Pakistani culture and now it has become the complete agenda where LGBTQIA has been incorporated (Personal Communication, at University B, 18-8-2023).*

The culture of movements has paved their way in Pakistani society through the help of different NGOs and INGOs who have been stressing the rights of all genders since it is a right of every human being to have equal rights and equal opportunities therefore, liberal and elitist people raise their concern to incorporate them in a society equally. Similarly, Gedro & Mizzi (2014) in their research emphasized that feminism theory has shifted trends of stereotyping genders and bringing equality therefore, highlighting the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community. Likewise, respondent Twelve believed it is their utmost right as he mentioned his viewpoint:

*I think everyone has a right to express their opinion or to march or to protest or to appear in front of the media, in front of people, in front of everyone I think that's what they are doing which is completely right (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

Feminist movements started from the rights of black women rights which were later taken over by white women who were undermining the essence of their problems. Similarly, Tyson

(2023) in his study referred to the third wave of feminism as a huge contribution of African American feminists who highlighted the role of intersectionality in women's experience. However, white women hold more powerful positions than black women. Moreover, all marches are held by upper-class women who aren't aware of actual problems. Also, Khushbakht & Sultana, (2020) mentioned that feminism has been a myth developed by the elite people aiming to fulfil their own agendas and all the rights of the women they are portraying is scam. In this regard, respondent Eighteen shared a similar narrative:

*In the Women's March, elite people who use the platform to increase their PR or their individual benefit, don't do anything on the ground level whether it is for women or for intersex. They only create an issue of patriarchy which they are not even experiencing, has she ever seen the side area of Sindh, say Tharparkar, what is the problem of a woman there? Is she given the right to education? How is her husband treating her? She doesn't know all these things and to give rights to a gay or a lesbian to do whatever they want, I think is inappropriate from a religious or cultural point of view, neither this is not allowed, nor we have learned this (Personal Communication, at University B, 19-8-2023).*

Aurat March has also been criticized a lot on different platforms for its agendas as people do believe our religion Islam has clearly mentioned in the Quran, hadith, or other teachings about the rights of women. Even though all problems mentioned today have already been told by our Prophet SAW because before the advent of Islam women were oppressed. Nowadays most of the marches are mobilized and organized by the LGBTIQ community, therefore, they are playing a front role (Saigol & Chaudhary, 2020). Respondent Fifteen during the discussion shared his distressing feelings by opposing the Aurat March against religious values as,

*If we look at the Aurat March in Pakistan, it promotes Western culture however, if we look at the Aurat March in terms of religion women's rights are given to us by Islam. If we listen to the last sermon of Prophet Muhammad SAW, we get to know about women's rights, but the Aurat March in Pakistan is based on Western ideology and no doubt LGBTQ is also promoted in it (Personal Communication, at University A, 3-8-2023).*

During the Aurat March, the slogans and posters highlighted inappropriate language to disseminate non-Islamic thinking (Ali et al., 2020). The slogans used during the Aurat March created an unravelling war between men and women which was fuel to fire where men were bashing women for asking for such rights that were unnecessary and creating pointless issues whereas women on the other hand cursed patriarchy and Pakistani society system violating their rights and suppressing them. Patriarchal systems can generate a sense of superiority by oppressing one gender (Cynthia, 2017). Moreover, it is believed that Aurat March is against the kinship system and trying to destroy the family culture (Batool et al., 2021). In this certain aspect, male respondent Fourteen expressed his thoughts as:

*Before the Aurat March starts their banners are reviewed by the head of the march who is organizing the event, the protest reviews the banners and censors the banners so a lot of the things that you see on social media, on Aurat March, a lot of those things are filtered a lot of the things have been discarded. So, if this censorship was not present, I don't know what else we could have been seeing in this Aurat march, so I think that my answer is that they are playing a very key role in promoting LGBT in Pakistan (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023)*

Some women disagreed with the above-mentioned narrative as they believed it was their complete right to say whatever they wanted and stand against male-dominated societies that were trying to control women of society. Similarly, the fourth wave of feminism highlighted sexism and incorporated women of every color, lesbian, and transgender women highlighting intersectionality in order to achieve equality (Tyson, 2023). However, in the context of Pakistan, the majority of respondents opposed those women for promoting such absurd ideology as one of the female respondents Nineteen backlashed Aurat community as:

*Sadly, Aurat March is promoting the agenda opposite to what they were working on but now they are doing everything else except that main agenda. So, the problem is that the radical feminism we follow preaches the same thing that women should have equal rights, definitely, they should have equal rights to men, but the problem is that they spread hatred towards men, so it's deviating from equality and promoting hatred and when you support this kind of stance it promotes hatred in a society so when there already are clashes among different genders so it becomes fuel to the fire. I think they should promote the rights of intersex people who are actually marginalized, rather than promoting gay and lesbian sort of things in Pakistan (Personal Communication, at University B, 30-8-2023).*

Thus, this argument is still not terminated yet and unfortunately, nowadays intersex community is opposing feminist women because firstly they were kind of hope for them to accomplish those rights that they are fighting for but over time they have hijacked their name to express their own motives such as promotion of lesbian, gays, bisexuals, and all other diverse genders. Due to this, it gave room to everyone with self-perceived identity (Islam, 2020). In this regard, respondent Five shared her stance that:



*Aurat March was about women's rights, but the concept is going somewhere else. Even intersex people are opposing the Aurat March because their rights are not being highlighted so, if you look at the Aurat March, you will see more transgender community which is misleading for people (Personal Communication, at University B, 26-7-2023).*

Tactlessly, the foremost crucial agenda of the Aurat March has been refabricated due to which this issue is even more exacerbating. Additionally, people who are participating in such marches are not even well aware of why they have joined marches, what is the actual agenda of these movements or even they don't even know the real problem. As Saigol & Chaudhary (2020) in their study mentioned that now marchers are using the word 'womxn' rather than just women, here 'x' depicts the inclusion of non-binary individuals. So, clearly in Pakistan such agendas are being promoted and everyone is projecting their own problems rather than collectively working for the whole women or intersex community. With respect to this concern, respondent Fourteen declared his view as:

*I was watching this video just recently in Karachi there were some males actually they were actually being interviewed and the interviewer asked them, why are you fighting for LGBT rights when it's an Aurat March? So, he's like it's our rights too and we want to do it because we stand with women and women stand with us. Then later on, he asked do you know that this is not accepted in Islam? And then he's like no I do not care if it's not accepted in Islam, it's my feelings, Islam does not come before my feelings, and then later on he was asked a question what do you think about pedophilia? And he's like no, it's not accepted in Islam and he's like you are contradicting your own statement (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

Hence, these movements gave rise to endless other problems like the culture of parties, and private gatherings which are explicit in terms of endorsing western dressing, exposing sexuality, and involvement in drugs and other immoral activities; however, most of such festivities are happening underground in order to stay hidden and not being subjected of violating country's law, moral codes and religious conducts. Similarly, Azhar (2013) mentioned that gay men on every Thursday evening gather around forming a circle to have anonymous group sex while people believe it as some strange ceremony. Respondent Two shared her thoughts in this regard:

*Basically, the purpose of the Aurat March was very misunderstood and misinterpreted as well. It was misinterpreted because of the freedom of speech and the LGBT community as a chance to avail itself of activism. I saw that after Aurat March, it became very famous the festival, which was being arranged in Karachi, was sponsored by a foreign DJ so it did give rise to such issues (Personal Communication, at University B, 19-07-2023).*

Consequently, Aurat March over the years has been targeted due to its ideology as their motive not only deviated but they have incorporated the LGBTIQ community in a country like Pakistan where the majority population follows the religion Islam and Islam considers homosexuality as a sin therefore, it has been an ultimate struggle for people promoting such agenda at Aurat March. Overall, participants believed that the Aurat March is playing a huge role in the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community because the narrative presented by this community has clearly been portrayed through banners, social media campaigns, and women's rights organizations. Similarly, not only women's rights were being highlighted, but the actual concern that was raised by people that the Aurat March diverged from its actual purpose was for the rights of underprivileged women who have no right to education, right to vote, employment

opportunities, facing any kind of violence and much more. However, this notion is now completely hijacked by an elitist feminist who is just presenting problems that they have never faced. Moreover, the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people has been a new emerging trend that is threatening the social and moral values of Pakistani culture and religion. Nevertheless, the rights of intersex should be guaranteed since it's something that is not their fault so they shouldn't be blamed, stigmatized, and excluded from society. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were against the ideology of today's Aurat March whereas very few still believe it is only meant for women's rights.

#### **4.3. The Catalyst of Change from Pixels to Pages**

Social media has been a major part of people's lifestyle due to its necessity and in order to fit in society and the modern world therefore, the trends on social media have played a crucial role in the acceptance and promotion of the LGBTIQ community all over the globe as well as in Pakistan. Western media is using popular celebs to create awareness and acceptance of inclusive gender identities. Dow (2001) in his research showed how the American comedian and actress Ellen DeGeneres was praised and wholeheartedly welcomed by people on her revealed identity as lesbian. Therefore, it has been interpreted that such acts on mainstream media allow people to accept self-perceived identities. However, in Pakistan, people cannot come out on mainstream media to reveal their self-perceived identities because they might get tortured for that therefore, such people use social media platforms to share their opinions or even share their identity because social media promotes freedom of speech to all-inclusive genders especially whatever west promotes. In this context, respondent Nineteen shared her personal thoughts:

*Social media obviously has very much power if we compare it to other forms of media as people have more freedom, they can openly discuss their own rights if that person belongs to a*

*particular sexual orientation, they can openly talk about it, they can openly preach about it and nobody's going to stop them. PEMRA is not going to stop them, western media does not apply any sanctions on those people so they can openly preach those ideologies (Personal Communication, at University B, 30-8-2023).*

Additionally, social media is one of the powerful tools in the contemporary world where digitalization, artificial intelligence, and different media platforms are being used to disseminate messages, create trends, gain popularity, or even provide acceptance. Also, media has been used as an influential tool in shaping people's perception regarding the world (Gerbner, 1969) therefore, the LGBTIQ community uses social media to spread their message to the masses. Moreover, these online platforms have inbuilt algorithms through which similar information will be shown on people's social media accounts which either they have talked about, or they have searched about, has a vigorous impact in forming people's opinions. Similarly, respondent Sixteen asserted her experience as:

*Social media is very readily available to everyone, and Western media is quite frankly propagating it even if you look at the algorithms on Instagram, if I see one post regarding LGBTIQ, I will skip it but then I will keep on seeing that all throughout. If I am talking about it right now, the AI is so sharp, that something like this is going to come on my screen, on my phone, this is what you are interested in. Those posts will automatically come on my screen even though I don't want to see them, but because I have spoken about them, they are constantly going to come on my screen. Social media is promoting it, even on YouTube, if you watch one video like that, those things will continuously show up on your screen (Personal Communication, at University B,18-8-2023).*

Social media is much more diverse in its nature as the sole purpose is not only to disseminate information or entertainment to the masses, but it help people build their own narratives and community through freedom of speech therefore, the LGBTIQ community is gaining popularity and acceptance because social media promotes inclusivity, celebrates pride months, pride marches and choosing this community representatives as the ambassadors of brands to gain more reception. Thus, the inclusivity of LGBTIQ individuals in media significantly reduced stigmatization towards them (Hart, 2000). Similarly, two of my respondents shared the same experience regarding this as respondent Fourteen said:

*I think that social media itself per se is like playing a major role in promoting LGBT even if you look at many brands like BMW, Mercedes, Nike, and all other brands like in June or July I don't know which month is the pride month but they change their display pictures from the simple ones to the rainbow flags so I follow Mercedes, I follow BMW not because of their agendas but because I like their cars. Why am I seeing these rainbow flags? (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

After a huge struggle, the concept of gay pride shifted from shame to pride, and this community was no longer afraid to embrace their sexuality in public. Furthermore, the philosophy of great pride assumes that sexuality is not only but also should be the primary source of identification, community, and self-esteem (Nabila, 2020). A similar narrative was shared by respondent Sixteen who also witnessed these similar activities on social media which are promoting the LGBTIQ community all over the globe in this regard she mentioned,

*Social media I think in June or March, they celebrate this pride walk and everything, that has started taking place in Pakistan as well. They combine it with the Aurat March, their pride*

*walk, rainbow flags, and everything so because of that, social media is promoting this community* (Personal Communication, at University B, 18-8-2023).

Social media platforms don't always have credible information as it may be posted by an individual therefore, is less authentic (Kusumasondjaja, 2012) thus, it's more like people following blindly because it is being normalized and considered groovy in society. Also, people recklessly follow celebs, influencers, bloggers, or other public figures maybe because of their appearance, content, or ideology. It has been observed that Pakistani public figures, literature, music, films, and especially social media allow such content which supports the LGBTIQ community to openly stand for themselves. In this regard, respondent Nine clearly stated that:

*A film was made maybe a year ago, it was about trans people, there were protests against it and there was one song by Ali Sethi I guess rang, he was depicting all of that and even if you talk about literature of Ali Sethi's sister Mira Sethi, she has written a book I don't know the name of the book but she in the book promotes incest sex, she promotes LGBTQ, she's romanticizing the relationship of a brother and a sister, of a woman and a woman, of a male and a male. So, yes, there are songs, movies, and literature that support this community* (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).

Moreover, the majority of the respondents talked about the film Joyland which was released in 2022 and later on, was banned due to the portrayal of the LGBTIQ community in it. Similarly, Guardian (2022) in a study mentioned that People's opinions on the release of Pakistan's first Cannes contender and Queer Palme winner movie "Joyland," were troublesome, with the unfavorable majority viewing it as not adhering to Pakistani society's social ideals and moral standards while the favorably inclined views criticized the ban as showing prejudgment

toward the society's marginalized segment. In this regard, respondents (Four, Six, Nine, Ten, Thirteen, Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen) mentioned the huge contribution of Pakistani industry in the promotion of this community, and they mentioned the name of the movie Joyland along with other Pakistani dramas as the source of the boost of LGBTIQ community in Pakistan. As respondent Thirteen said,

*Joyland is basically about a story of a transgender, they fall in love and stuff basically the idea of promoting LGBTIQ which I would not agree with* (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).

Different activists opposed the banning of Joyland and the LGBTIQ community should be normalized, in this regard, Senator Mushtaq Ahmed (member of Jamaat-e-Islami) described Joyland as against Islam (Ali, 2022). Not only Joyland but various dramas and music by Pakistani artists were shown on social media which clearly promotes this community's growth even more because such powerful people support this community. The majority of respondents (respondents Five, Six, Seven, Nine, Ten, Fifteen, Sixteen, Eighteen, and Nineteen) mentioned the same artists whose recent news went viral in promotion of the LGBTIQ community which was criticized such as they mentioned Ali Sethi (famous singer) because of his recent gay marriage scandal, Mehrbano (Pakistani actress) and Saheefa Jabbar (Pakistani Actress) for their interview in support of LGBT in Aurat March, and lastly, Instagram blogger Dr. Moiz (transgender) also known as Mehrub for publicly supporting LGBTIQ community in Pakistan. With respect to this discussion, respondent Five stated that:

*There is Ali Sethi's song, or rather an album, for LGBTIQ people especially for the Q community so, I think it has become very open. It is being promoted a lot in music and very*

*famous people on social media, they also belong to the LGBTIQ community, and they openly tell us that we belong to them. There are a lot of bloggers who openly promote the concept of LGBTQ. I think the leading personality in Pakistan who is promoting the concept of LGBTQ is Meerab (Personal Communication, at University B, 26-7-2023).*

Correspondingly, the increase in the intensity of social media allowed people to find their way to earn money through it therefore, Mustafa (2022) in his research identified that different people started their careers as bloggers or influencers. Moreover, the media is also playing a role in eliminating stigma by portraying a positive image of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan. One of the renowned bloggers who identify herself as transgender was mentioned multiple times by the majority of the respondents who believe her role in the promotion of this community is immense. In this regard, respondent Eighteen mentioned that:

*Recently, I saw some interviews on social media, there is a Doctor Moiz who is a very offensive and bad-mouthed person so, he himself is involved in these things, he is involving transgenders, intersex, gays, and lesbians with him and openly taking pride in doing these things. Also, he said that he would bring acceptance of this community in Pakistan (Personal Communication, at University B, 19-8-2023).*

The promotion of the LGBTIQ community is not limited to the Aurat march or social media because recently, one of the renowned educational institutions decided to invite a famous transgender person to give his valuable experience and opinion to children. Dr Moiz was invited to speak at Ted x ISL but later disinvited being a transgender personality (Salam, 2022). But that was backlashed by the parents who blamed school authorities for irresponsible behavior that can



destroy future generations. In this context, two of the respondents (respondents eleven and nineteen) shared a similar narrative. As Respondent Nineteen stated:

*Recently I don't remember the school name, I guess LGS or Beaconhouse, when they banned Doctor Moiz from coming for a guest talk at their school, a lot of the influencers and bloggers were bashing that particular school why they stopped it, they don't want people to talk on this, but it's kind of actually a brainwashing when you aren't doing your research that this person is actually promoting LGBT community. That person has his own persona of a drag queen so when this kind of person goes and talks to children, what kind of impact they are going to make on those children? And this certain age of adolescence is vulnerable, they are going through hormonal changes so when you expose them to such kind of content, already they have a lot of confusion in life and you're adding the confusion of sexual orientation so it's going to be a problematic thing (Personal Communication, at University B, 30-8-2023).*

Social media on the one hand allows all-inclusive genders to have freedom of speech but on the other hand, whosoever speaks against the guidelines that are in favor of this community bars their freedom of speech by taking actions against them. In the context of Pakistan, even mainstream media doesn't allow such content to appear or be promoted but social media doesn't have any limits since it's under the control of western lobbies. Studies showed that mainstream media limits the role of the LGBTIQ community which creates hurdles for them (Fox & Ralston, 2016). Correspondingly, a few of my respondents shared a similar narrative that whenever they were vocal against the LGBTIQ notion, their accounts were deleted or given warnings. Respondent Thirteen revealed his experience as:

*Recently two of my IDs were deactivated, and they were deleted from Instagram, I said something that it's not good for our children to learn about sex at the age of 5 rather than learning about things that matter. Then they deleted my account so it's basically taking free speech from people why is it that a specific group is given the power of free speech, and they are empowering minorities over the majority (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

Moreover, western media such as Netflix has a huge viewership from Pakistan which silently endorses Western ideologies in people's minds therefore, numerous studies have demonstrated that media endorsement impacts the audience's attitudes and perceptions towards non-heterosexuality or non-cisgenders. Further, Calzo & Ward (2009) examined the attitudes of acceptance through media exposure among college students towards homosexuality, and the results depicted reduced stigmatization and prejudice related to homosexual individuals. Therefore, people in Pakistan are also somewhat giving them acceptance as respondent Twenty spoke in favor of this community:

*Social media provides a voice and a safe space for LGBTIQs to express themselves and helps spread awareness. However, there still is a long way to go as centuries-old religious indoctrination is not easy to overcome (Personal Communication, at University A, 25-8-2023).*

Consequently, Taylor (2013) and Fox & Ralston (2016) in their similar research mentioned that online sites are more acceptable in providing them space which leads to their better well-being moreover, intersectionality helped the LGBTIQ community to make society more accepting towards them and their number have grown as they are using different platforms and engaging celebrities. Therefore, it has somewhat done a great job in the inclusivity of this

community. Additionally, intersex has also benefited from this as their rights were also highlighted as respondent Nineteen mentioned that:

*There was this page, I guess, episodes with Julie so, they were actually doing something good. Julie belongs to a certain intersex community, and she was portraying the issues of intersex people in Pakistan, the kind of stigma, the kind of marginalization they face, the violence they face, the brutalities they face from people who exploit them for sexual favors and then they treat them like animals. Firstly, they ask them for sexual favors and then they treat them badly and brutally so that one platform is actually promoting something good (Personal Communication, at University B, 30-8-2023).*

Social media has its pros and cons depending on the usage of the medium, the place where it has been used, and what kind of content is being promoted. Countries like Pakistan are traditional in their way of living by following values assigned by religion therefore, LGBTIQ content would be more appreciated in other countries than in Pakistan. This community has always been backlashed in Pakistan due to its ideology against the cultural, moral, and religious values of the country, and throughout the data collection respondent shared their concern that it shouldn't be accepted as it will ruin our traditional values, but these trends are not going to stop therefore, this community might find its way in Pakistan sooner or later.

#### **4.4. Spectrum of Love: Contravene Cultural Notions**

Pakistan has been prominently enriched with diverse ideologies, customs, traditions, and norms collectively forming a unique vibrant culture. The people of Pakistan are either culturally or religiously driven however, our culture is being under the influence of religion. From the very beginning, only two genders were considered as a part of society therefore, the concept of

diverse gender identity became a cultural shock due to which people who are homosexuals, bisexuals, or pansexual are criticized and aren't given equal rights as other genders. Aurat Foundation (2016) conducted in-depth research which cited that in South-Asian nations, transgenders are usually known as Khawaja Sira, Khusra, or Hijra who publicly dresses themselves as women. Historically, these people in the subcontinent served as the caretakers of the Mughal empire and also made huge contributions to poetry, music, and art but, they lost those respectable positions and served in begging and prostitution (Saria, 2021). No matter what they were doing, transgenders always faced marginalization, stigmatization, and oppression in society. Similarly, respondent Nine during the interview mentioned his concern:

*If people start reading about the anthropology of culture or religion, they'll have some logical sense to oppose this community, they'll know how they are just destroying your culture and are just going absolutely against your religion and when you destroy the culture of a country it just goes downwards. Let's say there's a woman in the US who comes into Pakistan, and she wears a bikini on the road and then she gets apprehended obviously and then she talks about how her women's rights were violated. No, your women's rights were not violated, you violated the culture of a country, the societal norms of a country, you're the one in the wrong place so, just telling people that you don't have to respect the culture, the culture is wrong, the societal norms that you don't have to respect these are the steps and trends that are getting incorporated into society (Personal Communication, at University A, 3-8-2023).*

Culture is one of the foremost important parts of every society due to its diverse nature which differentiates countries from each other. As Tilley (2000) described the concept of Cultural Relativism as understanding cultural practice in one's own culture since every culture's moral judgments are valid and true therefore, the concept of the LGBTIQ community is

unacceptable in Pakistani culture due to its ideology, norms, and values against the culture of Pakistan. The notion of cultural relativism highlights that conditions are correct in their own cultural meaning. Respondent Thirteen shared his knowledge that:

*According to one historian, War, I guess he says that the basis of the existence and survival of humans is culture and religion. These are the two things that bring people together, a society exists of three things morality, religion, and the third one is law. So, if you take out morality, morality comes with religion. Religion tells you doing a certain thing is wrongdoing and a certain thing is good it's basically giving you morality. So, if you take out this aspect, which basically they're trying to do, taking out religion it means you're taking out morality so if the morality is taken out of a society, the law will completely end if you don't care about what is right or wrong, what should be done and what should not be done. Then everyone will be in an anarchic state, it will become a degenerate society (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

The culture of Pakistan is diverse in nature due to which some liberal cities are overwhelmingly accepting new ideologies as compared to the conservative ones who are deeply following traditional norms and oppose the LGBTIQ community and other Western ideologies. Since the idea of gayness is not fixed, it depends on social and cultural factors (Ortiz, 1993) therefore, people within the country also have different narratives based on the environment they are in, although almost everyone is following the same religion and cultural norms. In this regard, respondent One expressed her understanding as:

*If you look at it culturally, there are different trends for example, the culture of Islamabad is accepting this but if I look at it from the background of Gilgit I don't think this will*

*be accepted there because of the way people think and sit there is totally different as compared to Islamabad, Karachi and other well-developed cities (Personal Communication, at University A, 19-7-2023).*

Since Western societies under the notion of ethnocentrism believe in their superiority (Tilley, 2000) but Pakistani culture has not only been challenged by Western ideologies because Pakistan's own traditional values are morally flawed because whatever is happening in madrasas, redlight areas, stage dancers places, prostitution, and transgender communal spaces all is against traditional values and such acts violate the rights of intersex and women. The court supposed that Khawaja Sira as a self-identity different from heteronormative people who face social stigmatization due to their experiences as sex workers, entertainers, and performers (Hussain, 2023). But still, people do approach these sex workers, and dancers and get involved in activities. In this context, respondent Fourteen stated his perspective as:

*It's more of an immoral tradition that is being run in Pakistan mostly from my region in KPK and also in South Punjab there is a lot of Pedophilia present, and I think that this is where I actually bash the Pakistani community that on one hand, they are against LGBT, against lesbians, gays, and transgenders. On the other hand, in the rural areas, a lot of immoral practices are being done even in Madrasas like you know rural areas and even in cities, the outskirts of the cities. These kinds of actions are being done on a daily basis so, this actually influenced a lot of this community because when they do these actions, obviously when you're trying something out even if it's good even if it's wrong, but it pleases you then you go to lengths to do more (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

The culture of Pakistan has its beauty in terms of its distinctiveness which makes it different from other countries. However, sometimes culture is extreme for not accepting gender minorities who challenge the notion of traditional values. Colibri (2018) in his research mentioned that people use abusive language for LGBTIQ individuals which causes extreme humiliation for them. Running from such situations gay men usually get married and start their dual life, one to satisfy society and one for themselves. This is not an easy situation for them because the threat of being caught lies on their head and nobody will support them. Respondent Ten in this context uttered:

*Well, if we mix culture and religion then I am afraid that culture is very aggressive and very extreme and there will be bloodshed and killing of LGBTIQ people in the name of honor, we should focus more on the religious aspect because our religion has some soft aspect in this case, so you need to control them and rehabilitate them (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).*

Due to different upbringings, ideologies, and environments, people have distinct opinions few respondents opposed the cultural values of Pakistan as they believe, they are conservative in nature due to which the LGBTIQ community faces hurdles. Several communities of different religions don't support this community because it is against their cultural values therefore, some respondents also believed that the notion of LGBTIQ is against the cultural values of Pakistan (Khushbakht & Sultana, 2020). In this context, respondent Twelve shared his viewpoint that,

*After all our religion doesn't accept them and our culture is biased towards the religion, our culture was based on the Indus Valley Civilization which we have forgotten, after the establishment of Pakistan we said we don't belong to that culture, we now Pakistanis, we*

*redefined our identity. With re-identification, everything is over and now I don't think our culture is the same because of our religion so we won't accept it* (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023)

Culture is the most significant part of Pakistan because of its uniqueness and diversity. It can be changeable depending on social class and the needs of the society as over a few decades Pakistan has been under the influence of Western ideologies which has somewhat affected the culture of Pakistan. Therefore, new ideologies such as the promotion of the LGBTIQ community have become trendy although people don't know the effects of such actions. The majority of the respondents shared their viewpoint against this community for breaching the values of the culture whereas few believed that culture needs to be altered and be more adaptable to the new change.

#### **4.5. Breaking Barriers: Exploring the Intersection of Religion and LGBTIQ Community**

Pakistan is an Islamic country where the majority of Muslims reside along with other religious minorities such as Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, and Ahmadis. Muslim majority follow the same religious ideologies or principles however, a majority is also further divided into different sects or schools of thought therefore, different sects have different ideologies and principles for certain things. A similar study presented by Rehman and Polymenopoulou (2013), highlighted that homosexuality is forbidden (haram) in Islam under unanimous consensus of scholars of major Islamic schools of Shia and Sunni. Moreover, considered a psychological, physical, and moral disorder. Similarly, the Shafi school also considers homosexual intercourse as heterosexual zina however, apart from the Hanafi school all schools agree on the same point whereas minor doctrines like Zahirism (a Sunnite doctrine) and Rafida (a Shi'ite doctrine) suggest that homosexuals should not be punished. Consensus on punishment regarding



homosexuality has four leading Sunni schools (Shafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Jafari) and other Islamic scholars considering it a major sin and punishable by death. Whereas only for the Hanafi school homosexuality is a slightly less serious issue and can be punished through physical punishment. In this regard, respondent Eight mentioned that:

*The basic belief is that homosexuality is basically considered as haram or impermissible in Islam so, due to that reason, the LGBTIQ community will suffer or is suffering backlash from the community, Pakistani community as a whole whereas converting your gender or the people from transgender community are considered, it is also basically considered as an act of going against the nature. So, in Pakistan, these are the main beliefs that are basically one of the reasons that these people will not be accepted in any sense (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).*

One of the important incidents mentioned in the Holy Quran is the incident of Hazrat Lut (AS) nation where the whole nation was destroyed because they started doing things against the religious values such as following the LGBTIQ community therefore, all of them were ruined. As Rehman and Polymenopoulou (2013) also stated in their study there are frequently interpreted and associated terms for same sex. Juristic explanation of homosexuality as an offense to be punishable through stoning by death is derived from the narrative of the struggles of Prophet Lut with his people as two cities (Sodom and Gomorrah) in the land of Canaan (today known as the land of Israel) where prostitution and excessive sins were taking place. Similarly, respondent Six shared her viewpoint:

*Considering our religious beliefs there have been prophets whose communities and everything was destroyed because they were followers of this particular sect like they followed LGBTQ, so we have those stories. I wouldn't call them stories, but they are actual things that*

*have happened so those things are there and because of that, it definitely has influenced people's attitudes. Even if I want to support that, I will not because I have that religious belief that it is wrong, even if those who are nowhere close to religion or those who identify that we are liberal Muslims, the new term that has come in, like liberal Muslims. So liberal Muslims might go and say, oh, love is love, this and that but it is not. It is at the end of the day, your religious belief that keeps you grounded. So, this comes under the wrong, even religiously, culturally, and morally in all ways, it comes under the wrong (Personal Communication, at University A, 18-8-2023).*

Before the advent of Islam, all the underprivileged women and people were suppressed because people considered them lower in status so, for them Islam has defined all the rights about 1400 years ago through Quranic teachings, Hadith, and Sunnah of Prophet SAW. However, people didn't really follow the teachings of Islam therefore, neither the rights are protected in society nor people are aware of their rights. The presence of LGBTIQ specifically homosexuality has been criticized by Islam at the time of Prophets and severe kind of punishment was implemented (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013). Similarly, the majority of respondents mentioned the same punishment under the religious or shariah-based principle. Consequently, respondent Fifteen stated that:

*If we go to Islam in old times if such a case was held it was called Sansar they were tied to a tree and stones were thrown on it and stoned to death so this is what Islam says and if it is in my hands, I will do the same with them because what is forbidden in Islam because a whole nation has been punished for this so I think it is very wrong (Personal Communication, at University A, 3-8-2023).*

Analogously, Rehman & Polymenopoulou (2013), Mustafa (2022), and Loft et al., (2022) in their research explained that LGBT and homosexuality are illegal in Pakistan because of

religious and Shariah-based laws against it. This act must be liable for punishment of either the death penalty, stoning to death, or life imprisonment or shall be liable to a fine and a minimum of 2 years imprisonment under religious principles. Furthermore, in 2018, the Pakistani government passed a law section 377 where same-sex marriage is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and it is still criminalized in Pakistan. Therefore, it is difficult to measure the total population of the LGBT community because, for the sake of survival, they hide their identities. However, it is estimated that tens of thousands of them live in Pakistan, especially in wealthy areas of Karachi. Similarly, respondent Fourteen added,

*In PPC (Pakistan Penal Code), there is a violation or penalty for unnatural lust, so unnatural lust could be anything that is not natural, that is not happening between a male and female of the age of majority as in 18 or above. Other than that, promoting such things that are against the Quran and Sunnah itself is a violation of the constitution as well so yes, if there is someone who is promoting LGBT in Pakistan, they could be subjected to numerous violations according to the constitution and according to PPC (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

The holy book of Muslims, the Quran clearly states in different Surahs about homosexuality as Surah Hud suggests the prohibition of homosexuality, Surah Al-A'raf represents people Lut committing obscenity, Surah Al-Hijr describes them as people in sin, Surah Ash-Shu'ara as people disobeying all limits, and Surah Al-Ankabut as people who commit vulgarity and practice wickedness (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013). Moreover, Surah I-Shura talked about intersex as “To Allah belong the dominion of heavens and earth; He creates what he wills. He gives to whom He wills female, and He gives to whom He wills males. Or He makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren. Indeed, He knows and is

Competent” (Aurat Foundation, 2016). Therefore, religion clearly mentions this. In the following context, respondent Nineteen said,

*If we talk religiously, our religious beliefs contradict this agenda of LGBT so definitely when we preach religious ideologies, Islam has defined moral code related to intercourse or related to intimacy between men and women and between men and men and women and women. So, if we see that I think that could influence the mindset of people, so they won't accept it. Culturally also it is morally inappropriate because obviously we have never seen it or we cannot even accept it even if it's occurring in our family or surrounding areas, so I don't think we can easily accept such things. I think negative perception ideas or negative orientations are more towards this LGBT community because of these religious and cultural affiliations or beliefs (Personal Communication, at University B, 30-8-2023).*

Religious people report more prejudice against homosexuality as compared to non-religious people (Roggemans et al., 2015) similarly, liberal people of Pakistan oppose religious values as they believe everyone deserves equal rights and status as other people irrespective of their gender or identity. Therefore, such people use social media platforms, feminist movements, or the help of INGOs to create their lobby and help incorporate the inclusivity of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan. Few of the respondents (respondents Three, Twelve, and Twenty) opposed religious and cultural values as respondent Twenty said:

*All religions including Islam are inherently misogynistic and anti-LGBTQ as evident from their canonical scriptures. The same goes for the Pakistani culture which considers this subject a taboo and such individuals sinners. It is a violation of their fundamental human rights*

*and fosters discrimination, stigma, and violence against this community* (Personal Communication, at University A, 25-8-2023).

One of the studies highlighted the perspective of the LGBTIQ community that individuals were forced to conflict between their sexualities and religion and even if they chose their religion, the religious beliefs would never accept their sexual identities (Wheeler, 2013). Simultaneously, people also oppose those liberal people because they are following Western ideology which is nowhere close to the religious and cultural values of Pakistan. So, they are also violating the country's moral values, in this regard respondent Eighteen mentioned his thoughts:

*First of all, if a person knows about their religion, then they will stay away from this, even if an intersex person says that Allah has created them this way, so it's fine but there are gays and lesbians, they shouldn't be in the first place because Islam says that there are two genders, men and women can marry each other and other than that nothing is allowed and there are strict punishments for same-sex. These people are very liberal, liberal itself is not a bad thing. If you read the definition of liberal, it says that everyone has an invisible bubble, anyone can do anything in that invisible bubble without harming anyone. If two guys are kissing each other, I will be offended because it's against my beliefs because Islam has told me to stop them and punish them* (Personal Communication, at University B, 19-8-2023).

Just like culture, religion is one of the most significant parts of people's lives as Islam has defined a way of life, moral codes, and conduct for people which becomes obligatory for them to follow. Whoever deviates from those beliefs ultimately leads to a path of committing sin. Pakistan is an Islamic state with its constitution of 1973 is also based on Islamic teaching, so

people religiously obey the commands of Allah Almighty and the teachings of Prophet SAW. Therefore, diverse gender identities and sexual orientations are not acceptable because they violate the notions of religion due to which Pakistan hinders in acceptance of the LGBTIQ community or homosexuality.

#### **4.6. Shedding Light on Unveiling Realities: Complex Nexus of HIV and Mental Health Cases Regarding the LGBTIQ Community**

The escalation of the LGBTIQ community has had numerous impacts on society as a whole since the elevation of HIV cases has been observed mostly in Western countries where diverse gender identities are acceptable. As Gadit's (2009) study mentioned the rise in HIV cases has increased over the years and men are seven times more than women contracting HIV. However, in countries like Pakistan people are scared of getting HIV because of religious and legislative rules. Respondent Fourteen mentioned his thoughts:

*One of the most popular countries where these practices are done like it is not monitored is Africa and Africa is known for having numerous cases of HIV for instance if there are two males they are involved in this kind of activity and if it is not by nature then keeping the laws of nature I think that these things can result in not just HIV but all sorts of viral diseases like chlamydia and herpes and these kinds of stuff so I do think that HIV and these kind of sexually transmitted diseases are a product of this community (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

In Pakistan even though strict restrictions are being imposed, HIV is still rising as Rajabali et al., (2008) in their study highlighted that HIV is escalating in Pakistan especially in men than women due to sexual activity, contaminated syringes, blood transfusion, and through mother-child contact. Homosexuality is considered illegal, but fear of God alone isn't enough to

discourage illicit activity among individuals having same sex. Respondent Sixteen shared her narrative:

*Initially, HIV was because of drug abuse and syringes but now because the LGBTQIA community has increased, things are quite readily available for individuals like if they are at some underground parties or in farmhouses away from the main city where the police might not go like kind of hideout spots, those things are accessible to people now. Initially, it was not, but now it is so that is an increase in HIV cases, and I think recently there was news of Islamabad, I think 2-3 months ago that there was an increase in HIV cases in Islamabad, and Islamabad is considered one of the elite cities of Pakistan so coming from here, drug abuse was not the only case, it was more LGBTIQ and how people were involved in regard to that (Personal Communication, at University B,18-8-2023).*

National Report Pakistan (2011) highlighted that HIV could happen due to several reasons but one of the foremost reasons is unprotected heterosexual contact, but homosexual and bisexual contact is also significant. Consequently, it has become an alarming situation for Pakistan especially living in an Islamic state that is against all these practices. In this regard, respondent Nine stated during the interview that:

*Absolutely unprotected sex between a man and a woman leads to HIV basically if I get 18 plus or something you see unprotected sex if it's between a husband and a wife, you won't see those problems, but you know you get into those relationships with prostitutes it's going to affect you. So, these sort of communities if say there are two gays, I do not think that they are going to stick with each other for the rest of their lives, they sort of keep changing the partners so yes HIV cases and obviously it's unnatural, anything that is unnatural will have effects on you (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).*

HIV is not related to just physical problem, it impacts the mental health of the person who gets this sexually transmitted disease since people in Pakistan only associate it with sexual acts which is not true so whenever they go for treatment, they face backlash, but they don't get treatment at first place. People who are living with HIV/AIDs are three times more prone to have mental health problems as compared to the general public (Travaglini et al., 2018). Respondent Nineteen shared interesting information in this regard,

*If we see the medical consequences of having gay or lesbian sex, it is harmful to their own bodies as well. It produces a certain kind of hormone which actually starts to deplete the brain activity because nature has created men and women and nature has established this phenomena to regulate sexual impulses in that particular intimacy so when you deviate from nature, the consequences will be there. This kind of health issue emerges for their own self, for their own bodies not just physically, but also mentally, and already they are mentally disturbed (Personal Communication, at University B, 27-7-2023).*

HIV is not the only problem the LGBTIQ community is facing but also mental health problems since they are being discriminated against, stigmatized, and marginalized in Pakistani society. They are also subjected to violence if they come out with self-perceived identities because that would violate a country's law. As Sarbini and Bintang (2019), mentioned in their research the influx of HIV cases and alleged acts against religious values and the state's ideology has created social disorder and a threat to the country's stability and security since it contradicts Quranic teachings, Hadith, Penal Code, and marriage laws. However, when all of this is happening, the main reason why people choose to deviate from natural and choose such steps has been neglected as people shared their stories that either they have faced any kind of harassment



or being raped in their childhood that's why they are like this, similarly, respondent Eighteen shared a miserable story as:

*It can be a person who was abused in his childhood, I was watching an interview with an Indian guy, and he said that he was abused in his childhood later, he realized that it is not like that. He was telling him that it is normal, and it happens to everyone. So, he was thinking that it is normal, but later, he realized that he was being raped then later, he turned out to be gay. It can be a mental disease as some men say that we are attracted to boys and if you are saying this as a Muslim, you should not even think about it or have desires because everything is written in the Quran (Personal Communication, at University B, 19-8-2023).*

Similarly, another incident quoted by respondent Nineteen who has a psychology background, therefore, she experienced it, so she shared her thoughts:

*Mentally it's creating disorientation in their minds, and it needs to probe why there is some sort of intimacy with the same sex. I remember there was a case of this certain female who came for therapy with a certain psychologist and she was telling her she was already married but was more interested in females than males so when psychologists tried to prove her what is the reason behind this then she came to know that in her childhood, she was molested by males so many times that she automatically forms a certain level of comfort with females so that comfort was actually converting into some sort of intimacy with females because of that trauma and molestation which if not would have happened so there would be different circumstances for her. So definitely there is an increase in HIV cases, and mental and physical problems for these individuals (Personal Communication, at University B, 27-7-2023).*

People usually associate psychological issues or mental illness with these homosexual people because it is considered against the natural laws. As Colibri (2018) in his findings analyzed that people associate their queer children with having mental disorders therefore, they disown them or throw them out of the house. This is not just religious-based discrimination, but culture also plays a huge role in defining the third gender as taboo for society. Therefore, it impacts their mental health the most. In this regard, respondent Fourteen indicated that:

*In the 1960s, there was a study being done by an American psychologist I forgot his name he said that it is a mental illness. I give an analogy I think it is like drugs if I have not tried a drug I would not have an addiction to that drug but if I do it then I would keep doing it so I think it is a mental illness and California, New York and North Carolina these states were the first to recognize LGBT and then later on India, they agreed on gay marriages so I think it is slowly building this community and a few years into this into this community I think a lot of the people come out depressed so yeah I do think that it could be a mental illness (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

Mental health problems have always been a stigma in Pakistan because of the lack of awareness and stigma associated with it similarly, in the context of the LGBTIQ community people usually relate as having psychological problems (Gadit, 2009). In this context, respondent Ten mentioned his point of view as:

*As I have mentioned very much earlier, first of all, we need to see what type of disease this is. I would say it is a disease, we should not be saying that these are the people who are like this by birth. No, this is a psychological adaptation because a child does not get sexual adaptation until it hits puberty, before puberty they don't even know what this aspect is. Initially, they are getting attracted to women and the opposite gender, if there is any psychological aspect*

*that they are getting attracted to the same gender it should be rehabilitated* (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).

Pakistan is still in the pipeline when it comes to psychological health awareness as people associate mental health issues with someone being crazy or affected by the Jinn or effects of black magic so, firstly it requires a lot of knowledge and understanding of cultural context. Similarly, in Pariaman people believe mental health problems are because of the influence of jinn (Sarhini& Bintang, 2020). As respondent Two shared her personal experience as:

*Since I belong to the mental health field myself, I cannot claim it as a mental illness because we go by books. Formerly homosexuality was a disorder in the DSM but since it was legalized in America, it was removed from the DSM it's not considered a disorder anymore. Whereas pedophilia is still considered a disorder if something is not considered a disorder in my literature. I have nothing to back it up with* (Personal Communication, at University B, 19-7-2023).

Similar information was shared by respondents nineteen and fourteen that previously Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders considered homosexuality as a mental disorder but not anymore (Kim, 2009; Bass& Nagy, 2020). This understanding could be correct in the context of Western countries but not in Pakistan because it is an Islamic-based country where there is no place for homosexuality that's why people consider those associated mental health issues absurd and immoral. So, there is an ongoing debate in this regard because the majority of people still don't accept the LGBTIQ community even in Western countries. As respondent Four defined during the interview that:

*I was watching a podcast the other day, the person scientifically and medically proved it, there are some people who have mental problems sometimes they say that they are animals or sometimes something else. They should counsel such issues as they are considered mental health problems (Personal Communication, at University A, 19-7-2023).*

Both HIV and mental health problems are sensitive issues when it comes to the LGBTIQ community because the LGBTIQ community is affected by them and also affects society by it as well. People with strong religious beliefs will always oppose this community for disturbing and challenging their religion and disrupting the coming generations whereas liberal people of Pakistan will understand mental health issues and different causes of sexually transmitted diseases therefore, this debate is still controversial in its nature.

#### **4.7. Shifting Dynamics: Criminalization and Decriminalization Outlooks**

The trends of acceptance of the LGBTIQ community have shifted over the recent years as the concept of criminalization and decriminalization has been subjected to change. Few countries over the years have accepted them by providing equal rights and opportunities whereas a few nations like Pakistan still don't allow this community to gain acceptance therefore, they are still pipeline and struggling for their rights (Lennox & Waites, 2013; Nicol et al., 2018). The concept of criminalization and decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community has been a topic of discussion for years due to its ideology which seems to be against the moral, cultural, societal, and religious values of Pakistan. Both the acts, either criminalization or decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community have strong opposition depending on the narrative of people. Therefore, during the data collection two different narratives were found as respondent Five said in favor of the criminalization,

*If we talk about transgender people, it is a rational choice as they were not happy with their gender so rationally, with their own consent, they changed their gender but according to our religion, it is a criminal offense not for intersex because it's not their fault, they are born like this* (Personal Communication, at University B, 26-7-2023).

There are two major offenses, one is criminal and the other is civil. If anything, is destroying a country or society as a whole then it becomes a criminal offense whereas if it impacts two people such as a rivalry between two to three which doesn't impact the society, it becomes a civil offense, and the government doesn't get involved in it (Ahmad, 2022). Therefore, the issue of the escalation LGBTIQ community become contentious in its nature whether it should be criminalized or decriminalized under the religious, cultural, and moral values of Pakistan. Correspondingly, participant Eight uttered that:

*Being an LGBTIQ member is a criminal offense as this particular act is destroying the family structure and even in Western countries, the divorce rate has severely boomed due to this particular act* (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).

Every nation has its own policies, laws, and codes of conduct that define whether certain acts are permissible or not. Similarly, the anthropology of cultures defines it as acceptable in their context which cannot be true for another country. Therefore, acceptance of the LGBTIQ community depends on the context of the country. Similarly, Mustafa (2022) in his research stated that the LGBT and intersex communities are considered to be the most vulnerable groups in Pakistan despite all the challenges, this community is slowly fighting for its rights but in 2018, the Pakistani government passed a law, section 377 where same-sex marriage is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and it is still criminalized in Pakistan. On this matter, the majority of the respondents (respondents Five, Eight, Ten, Nineteen, Thirteen, Fourteen, and Fifteen) stated it is

a criminal offense. Therefore, here researcher will share the narrative of one respondent from them so, on this subject, respondent Nine asserted his point of view as:

*It obviously is a criminal offense in Pakistan, but it's not a criminal offense in the US so, that's just the anthropology of the countries, you live in a country, and you have to respect the culture and societal norms. If it's a religious country it should be a crime and it is a crime. There is no way around it, to be honest, it's straight out a crime* (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).

Primarily Lennox & Waites (2013), Nicol et al. (2018), Loft et al.(2022), and Mugisha (2019) mentioned in their studies that several countries have laws that consider sexual acts with the same sex as criminalized acts and are commonly known as sodomy laws. Countries like Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Maldives consider this subject to criminalization and these offenses are liable to harsh punishment according to the country's laws. Similarly, respondent Fourteen who has an educational background in law shared his views during an interview:

*Well, If it's happening in California then let them do it because it's the state law, they are not being subjected to any violation but if they are doing it in Pakistan, Pakistan is an Islamic republic they cannot do it, if you do promote it here and you get death threats or subjected to torture then do not blame those people who are doing it to you because you are doing something very illegal in the country you are breaking the law* (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).

The idea of decriminalizing this community was also prevalent in the lesser extent of respondents because it is believed that every human being despite of their religion, caste, color,

creed, race, gender, identity, and sexual orientation should be given equal rights, status and opportunities as other normal citizens (Vanita, 2004; Cottet & Picq, 2019). Respondent Sixteen expressed her point of view on this aspect as:

*I think being an LGBTIQ member is a rational choice because you have right and wrong in front of you, you're choosing it by your own selves. Our country hasn't implemented the Sharia law, so we cannot call it a criminal offense. However, I think all the Middle Eastern countries, have implemented Sharia specifically Saudi Arabia, so it is a criminal offense there but not in Pakistan (Personal Communication, at University B, 18-8-2023).*

Since decriminalization promotes the safety of human rights and the well-being of this community which in short helps society grow because all-inclusive genders will be contributing to the betterment and prosperity of the society (Loft et al., 2022) similarly, few respondents were in favor of decriminalization of this community as respondent Twelve said that:

*It should be decriminalized of course but you know there should be a consensus between all state agents and all the maulvis, all the communities should have consensus of course then you can decriminalize. We should give them equal rights, they are just like us, they are just different sexually oriented people, they think like us, they eat like us, they watch music like us, they watch movies like us, and they might practice the same religion, just they might have different sexual things (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

Living according to one's own will is the kind of freedom the modern world requires and preaches through the medium of the media. Therefore, people have established the feeling of sympathy and empathy under the name of human rights for all-inclusive genders due to which

countries are now openly accepting the LGBTIQ community and even promoting same-sex marriages. In this regard, respondent Three and Two further added their viewpoint respectively,

*They should be given equal rights because that's their personal choice. If they are Muslim and they still choose to be someone like that it's their choice* (Personal Communication, at University A, 19-7-2023).

*You can give social acceptance as long as they are not hurting anyone but if it goes against your country, which means they are hurting you, I don't think so. That something like this should be permissible* (Personal Communication, at University B, 19-7-2023).

During the tenure of different governments of Pakistan, laws for such acts have been modified since religious parties in Pakistan have now the huge majority, and even in parliament, they play a huge role in accepting or rejecting a bill therefore, things that might be acceptable years ago are not acceptable now and vice versa. However, Pakistan is the worst place for sexual minorities due to which they live underground (Colibri, 2018). Respondent Nineteen shared her knowledge of this subject as:

*I can't say it's a criminal offense because if I remember during Zia-ul-Haq uh tenure, there was some sort of standardized code of conduct related to this. It could be a criminal offense if that particular state establishes it as a criminal offense otherwise it would be perceived as a personal choice of a person* (Personal Communication, at University B, 30-8-2023).

The exacerbating situation of the LGBTIQ community due to the support of the modern way of living and following Western standards has paved the way for decriminalization of this community which gave rise to the acceptance and recognition of this community (Mugisha, 2019). However, it is still a long way ahead in countries like Pakistan where people are Muslim,



and they won't accept anything that is breaching their moral values. With respect to this context, respondent Fifteen expressed his viewpoint as:

*If we decriminalize it then blood will be spilled, I mean in our country there are more extremists if I give my example, I am not an extremist but if I see someone doing something I will definitely get angry, and if I don't hit him, I will say bad stuff to him. It will damage the ideology and we can't accept this in Pakistan because our cultural values and our religious values can't accept this because we are traditional people and when it comes to tradition, this Western culture can't be accepted* (Personal Communication, at University A, 3-8-2023).

Similarly, Baudh (2013) in his study clearly mentioned that during the interviews with the Pakistani audience, the idea of decriminalization was mostly opposed. One respondent in his study explained that the idea of a decriminalization campaign is not fascinating because it will require ten years of strategy since it needs to cover family, community, religious, and patriarchal issues for proper implementation of decriminalization. Relatedly, respondent Nine shared his perspective on this particular subject:

*It should never be decriminalized as I said before what makes the world beautiful, is the countries distinguished is the specific culture that they have, and Pakistan is a country where we need to exercise the richness of the culture so I think decriminalizing these communities would obviously be a massive blow to our culture, religion our society so it should not be done* (Personal Communication, at University A, 27-7-2023).

Many countries, either religious or secular, believe that the acceptance of the LGBTIQ community is destroying the values of the countries regardless of their preaching notions of

human rights (Taylor, 2013). Therefore, in opposition to decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community, respondent Fourteen shared a narrative in this aspect:

*I don't think that it should be decriminalized, I would want it that way personally because these are violations of Islamic laws obviously, I cannot drink here if I start drinking or start promoting alcoholism, and want to make liquor shops that would be morally incorrect. Morality varies from country to country so it should stay criminalized because we the people of Pakistan think that our beliefs come first, and our country is Islamic (Personal Communication, at University A, 2-8-2023).*

The transgender bill somewhat instigated the debate of acceptance of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan which also gave rise to the subject of criminalization and decriminalization. If this is seen under the aspect of religion it is criminalized and should stay criminalized, but modern Western ideologies have impacted both cultural and religious values therefore, now people do consider the decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community even in Pakistan although it is violating laws of the country. This debate is still ongoing and may lead in another direction in the coming years.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Chapter five of this research entails the key findings that I have discussed with reference to empirical and theoretical literature along with the help of a theoretical framework. This chapter consists of my discussion on the broader theme of social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community in Islamabad, Pakistan. The study has analyzed significant insights about the unacceptability of the LGBTIQ community due to its violation of cultural, societal, and religious values (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013; Colibri, 2018, Loft et al., 2022; Mustafa, 2022) and the influx mental health problems and sexual transmitted diseases. Different theories were presented on the feminist movement (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014; Saigol & Chaudhry, 2020; Tyson, 2023) developing the narrative of acceptance of the LGBTIQ community through marches like the Aurat march.

In this current study, certain demographics such as the concept of age, gender, residential background, family structure, and program of study are defining the determinants to understand the concept of the LGBTIQ community, and its social acceptance with regards to culture, religion, and society. The age of the respondents has been classified into four categories of 2 years interval among all (20-21 years of age, 22-23 years of age, 24-25 years of age, and 26-27 years of age). Sigmund Freud emphasized on five stages of personality development which affect the human mind and thinking therefore, different age groups of people have different understandings of certain concepts. Gadit (2009) in his study mentioned that according to Sigmund Freud, all human beings are innately bisexual, and they can be heterosexual, or homosexual based on their experiences with their parents and others, so homosexuality should not be viewed as a pathology. Therefore, certain diversity in identity is dependent on the experiences of people.

My research finding showed that all of the respondents were highly educated with at least a bachelor's degree or above as mentioned in Table 4.4, the completed years of education; however, the majority of them were not completely aware of the concept of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer individuals. As Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Ellis, 2019) therefore, in this modern era acquiring knowledge is foremost important. Moreover, it is significant to acquire knowledge through the right medium rather than unauthentic ways like social media. The concept of the LGBTIQ community is a foreign concept for a traditional country like Pakistan. During the data collection, it was revealed that respondents were not fully aware of this new concept, and those who knew a bit had known it through media platforms even though acceptance has not prevailed yet, few people favored this community, and others highly opposed it.

One of the key demographics is the respondent's residential background which showed the diverse opinions and experiences of respondents regarding this community. Respondents who were born and raised in Islamabad seemed to have a more liberal perspective as they were open to having inclusion of the LGBTIQ community and emphasized on providing equal citizenship in Pakistan, a few respondents belonging to the KPK region were strongly opposing this community whereas few of them favored this community, however, all of them have seen gay men in Peshawar who are involved in illicit activities, meanwhile, respondents from Gilgit also didn't support this and they showed the concern that their ancestors will never approve such thing, likewise, respondents from Balochistan hesitated in the acceptability of this community, participants with a background of Kashmir also rejected this community and lastly, respondents from Punjab also showed their worry that this community can be problematic for the country's

future. Therefore, the majority of the population was against the ideology and acceptance of this community. Thus, people from different residential backgrounds have different opinions yet the majority always wins.

The intersectionality theory presented by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 examines the intersections and interactions between an individual's social identities and experiences within social structures. In the context of the LGBTIQ community, social institutions can perpetuate systems of privilege and marginalization (Few-Demo et al., 2016). Intersectionality can help understand how LGBTIQ individuals are affected by other forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and stigmatization. Respondents were knowledgeable about the meaning and context of intersectionality, during the data collection, it was disclosed that even though respondents were not willing to accept this community in Pakistan, but they believed that nobody wanted to harm them or violate their rights. Although stigmatization is still present among people due to the community's ideology against moral values, this is still a taboo in Pakistan.

Aurat Foundation with affiliation of USAID in 2016, examined the contextual meaning of the terms intersex and transgender in South-Asian culture as people believe it can be used interchangeably. People in Pakistan associate the term Hijra or Khawaja-Sira with transgender people although trans people change themselves according to their will and desires whereas intersex are born with such complications (Aurat Foundation, 2016). Similarly, during the interviews, one of the key findings of the research is the fact that people often confuse the terminology intersex with transgender, although all of the respondents were highly educated but they were confused because youth are using the means of social media as the medium for learning and acquiring knowledge which seems to be less authentic when it comes to providing awareness regarding social issues.

Moreover, this confusion escalated after the introduction of a transgender bill in 2018 which was hyped up on social media in which masses criticized the political leaders to propagate the agenda of acceptability of the LGBTIQ community against the religious values of Pakistan. Correspondingly, Jabbar (2020) also highlighted that the terminology in the bill was used under the context of Western terms which have a different and broader meaning to it. As the term transgender implies to Eunuch, Intersex, Trans people, and Khawaja Sira. Ahmed (2022) also pointed out that the masses claimed it was the promotion of homosexuality which was opposed by Islamic parties later on. During the interviews respondents were still jumbled about the terms intersex and transgender, whenever they were discussing intersex, they abruptly labeled it as transgender, and after the realization, they apologized and said, intersex.

One of the important facets discussed by all respondents was to provide all equal rights, opportunities, and citizenship to intersex people because they are born this way by Allah Almighty so it's not their fault. The transgender bill was meant to have rights and protection for these people by providing them equal access to education, basic health facilities, provision of national identity cards, freedom of expression, the right to work, and the right to vote (Islam, 2020; Mustafa, 2020; Ahmed, 2022). But due to all the fuss over the bill, the main issue of giving them rights was suppressed. The government of Pakistan claims to provide them with equal rights and now providing new initiatives for them. The constitution of Pakistan doesn't deprive anyone of their fundamental rights on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or caste however, third gender still has to go through a lot of efforts for recognition of their rights (Aurat Foundation, 2016; Gamage, 2021).

The trend of the feminist movement over the years has helped this community to raise its voice against the stigmatization and discrimination happening towards them. Therefore, last few

years from 2019 to 2020, the Aurat March focused more on the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community, and most marches are being organized and mobilized by the LGBTIQ community. Although this community was shunned for years but now playing a front role, and now marchers use the word 'womxn' rather than just women which depicts the inclusion of non-binary individuals (Saigol & Chaudhary, 2020).

Correspondingly, respondents identified the factors behind the decline of the Aurat March in Pakistan as it has lost its essence, initially, feminist movements were for vulnerable and underprivileged women who were deprived of rights like education, employment opportunities, facing structural inequalities and enduring domestic violence but today's Aurat March is about modern women and her insignificant issues which don't require such marches and most importantly they have included the LGBTIQ community with them who are now propagating their agenda, their rights, and liberty. This kind of ideology is not acceptable in the culture and religion of Pakistan therefore, every single respondent shared disappointment in this regard.

Culture just like religion, also showed resistance towards the LGBTIQ community as it is a cultural shock for Pakistani society because of the community's ideology and beliefs. Looking into the anthropology of cultures, every culture has its own unique values, customs, and traditions. As Tilley (2000) described the concept of Cultural Relativism which was presented by Anthropologist Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, and Sociologist William Graham Sumner as understanding cultural practice in one's own culture since every culture's moral judgments are valid and true therefore, every moral judgment is culturally relative, and no moral judgment is universally valid. Therefore, the concept of the LGBTIQ community is unacceptable in Pakistani culture due to its ideology, norms, and values against the culture of Pakistan. However, the same values in Western society may seem valid and rational. In this context, respondents were anxious

about the cultural change resulting in disruption of cultural values since cultural values vary from region to region for example, if somebody comes to Pakistan and wears a bikini then certainly people will shame her so, it's not a violation of her rights instead she is violating the culture of Pakistan.

The concept of gayness is not fixed, it depends on cultural and social factors, and it is a product of Western culture. The nature vs. nurture debate highlights the two facets of the origin of sexual orientation (Ortiz, 1993). The culture of Pakistan is somewhat a mixture of subcontinent traditions however, in Pakistan religion has a strong hold over culture due to which the existence of a homosexual community is quite dangerous for their lives as people patriotic to their country do feel this as an issue of shame, pride and honor to kill anyone who violates such laws (Colibri, 2018). Western societies under the concept of ethnocentrism believe themselves as superior (Tilley, 2000) over other nations on the basis of power and authority. Therefore, the LGBTIQ community holds more freedom of speech, equal access to rights, opportunities, right to same-sex marriage, and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations due to which this community is increasing day by day. This doesn't stop here as now other countries like Pakistan, also welcoming such communities gradually.

We often hear that morality is relative to culture and morality gives us the way to choose between right and wrong which varies from culture to culture. Since people in this modern era believe in having freedom over everything which can be chaotic if laws are removed there will be anarchy, morality will be questioned, and religion will lose its essence. Therefore, everybody, especially the LGBTIQ community needs to stay under defined circumstances otherwise it would be problematic for society and culture. A couple of the respondents revealed that if it were up to



them, they would treat this community with extreme brutality and cruelty because their moral values and beliefs are infringed by this community.

Religious resistance regarding homosexuality and diverse gender identity is present in the majority of Muslims, Christians, and Jewish people who aren't friendly in accepting the LGBTIQ community. LGBTIQ community itself is less religious as compared to the general public since conflict lies between religious beliefs and their sexual orientation (Taylor, 2013). The transgender community has a deep relationship with almost every religion including Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism where different terms such as Saris (Judaism), Eunuch (Christianity), Mukhannathun (Arabic), Tertiya-prakriti (Hinduism), Hijra (sub-continent), third gender, third sex, and Katoey (Buddhist) were used. Therefore, people associate these terms with their everyday use (Aurat Foundation, 2016). According to the finding of the present study under the theme: Breaking Barriers: Exploring the Intersection of Religion and LGBTIQ Community, the majority of the respondents associated this community with a religious context contravening their beliefs, morals, and ethics.

Islam has always ensured the safety and security of all human beings irrespective of caste, color, race, and creed. In Surah I-Shura it is mentioned "To Allah belong the dominion of Heavens and Earth; He creates what he wills. He gives to whom He wills female, and He gives to whom He wills males. Or He makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren" (Aurat Foundation, 2016). This verse of the Quran depicts three genders, male, female, and intersex and all other genders are self-perceived and considered as a sin in Islam. In this regard, the majority of the respondents claimed that their religious values don't permit them to follow or be a part of this community since it is prohibited in Islam. Moreover, the Holy Quran in different Surahs mentions forbidding homosexuality as Surah Hud suggests the

prohibition of homosexuality, Surah Al-A'raf represents people Lut committing obscenity, Surah Al-Hijr describes them as people in sin, Surah Ash-Shu'ara as people disobeying all limits, and Surah Al-Ankabut as people who commit vulgarity and practice wickedness (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013).

Similarly, another significant response by the majority of interviewees was on the incident of Qoum-e-Lut where the whole nation was tormented and destroyed because people were committing major sins like homosexuality, nudity, and prostitution. Respondents believed that following the LGBTIQ community would result in the same intensity of grave trouble for the present generation. Rehman & Polymenopoulou (2013) in their study explained the narrative of the struggles of Prophet Lut with his people where prostitution and excessive sins were taking place which are considered as a forbidden act. This incident itself is a huge lesson for the coming generation due to which people fear the same thing might happen if they follow such acts.

All constitutional laws of Pakistan abide the Islamic laws, and all decisions are to be taken under shariah-based laws which follow the guidance of the Holy Quran, Sunnah, and Hadith. Therefore, laws about LGBTIQ in Islam mention that sex between persons of the same gender violates Islamic laws and comes under the acts of Zina and should be liable to harsh punishment (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013; Loft et al., 2022; Mustafa, 2022). Similarly, research findings revealed that the majority of respondents openly talked against the LGBTIQ community as it is violating religious values. Some people when they were approached for an interview showed hesitation because of the sensitivity of this topic especially its relation to religion.

Pakistan is an Islamic country with an established criminalized code of conduct under the legislation to penalize the practice of “unnatural sexual offenses,” as prohibited by the Religion and Muslim law (Bello, 2012). People with a liberal mindset seem to be biased towards this

community as they believe LGBTIQ individuals also deserve all equal rights, opportunities, and liberty to do whatever they want. Moreover, according to these open-minded young respondents, being involved with the same sex is completely acceptable and appropriate because it is their personal choice to be this way. Whereas respondents with more spiritual or religious values appear to be against the community's ideology and suggest harsh punishment for them.

Another study by Marshall (2016), on LGBTIQ, investigated the LGBTIQ TV shows and their portrayed characters to ascertain how these shows are comprehended and how TV as mass media can be substantiated as a tool for propagating social and political interest among people. Thus, findings revealed that mainstream television has started to integrate LGBTQ representation more frequently within media culture, which encourages the normalization of gender and sexual disparities and acceptance of stereotypical portrayals of gender among viewers, which shows the retrospective effect of mass media. Western media has been playing a huge role in the acceptance of the LGBTIQ community through social media, Netflix series, and movies as they use gay and lesbian characters as leading actors to promote the inclusion of the LGBTIQ community in society. Similarly, famous actors and actresses are coming out to disclose their identity as diverse gender orientations such as American comedian Ellen DeGeneres's portrayal of Ellen Morgan as the first main gay character on a television program as the representation of homosexuality (Dow, 2001) which gain wider acceptance by the people. Moreover, numerous studies have demonstrated the relationship between media endorsement and its impact on audience attitudes and perceptions toward non-heterosexuality.

Similarly, in Pakistan now different movies and drama serials portraying such characters such as the movie Joyland which was nominated as Pakistan's first Cannes contender and Queer Palme winner movie, the favorably inclined views criticized the ban as showing prejudice toward

the society's marginalized segment (Guardian, 2022). Likewise, a vast number of the respondents have criticized Joyland as it is something against the moral and religious beliefs of Pakistan. People also criticized some celebrities like Ali Sethi, Mira Sethi, Mehrbano, Saheefa Jabbar, and Dr. Moiz Mirza for openly supporting this community in Pakistan through social media and the Aurat march.

Mainstream media in Pakistan has a very strong lobby that doesn't allow such content to appear on television which shows the degree of intolerance towards this community. Hart (2000) argued that misleading portrayals of homosexual people in mainstream media tend to produce feelings of intolerance, prejudice, and homophobia among people. Correspondingly, Fox & Ralston (2016) mentioned that the internet has been really helpful for the LGBTIQ community to disclose their identity, providing a safe space where they interact, socialize, share their experiences, and establish romantic relationships with each other. Therefore, social media helps them in embracing their self-identity however, Pakistan's government banned apps like Tinder and Grindr because such dating apps are helping the LGBTIQ community by providing a platform to connect and interact with each other (Gamage, 2021).

Media has always played a dynamic role through massive power controlling the world. Over the last few decades, social media has taken over mainstream media which gives more freedom of speech and rights to people than ever before. However, Western media is more liberal in terms of sexuality and gender whereas in Pakistan people do use social media, but they oppose such activities. Social media has been a highly influential means for propagating personal agendas not just in the West but also in Pakistan. During the research, it was found that respondents themselves were not following LGBTIQ individuals on social media because they didn't like the concept of having attraction towards the same gender. Moreover, if they are

following any foreign brand that endorses the LGBTIQ community, pride march, and pride walk, they simply hate that idea and show frustration towards that brand.

Historically, people were of the view that the existence of this community is equal to none, and Pakistan has a strong religious hold to limit the presence of these individuals however, it's not true, as this community lives underground and seems to be more active on social media since nobody can stop or ban them there. Also in Karachi, there were several events like a foreign DJ event, secret parties, and other sexual acts in brothels, shrines, and red-light areas where this community engages in illicit activities. Similarly, Azhar (2013) in his research mentioned that some people believed Pakistan is the best country for gay men and Karachi is known as a gay man's paradise as a gay community through online platforms meet each other, and have sexual relations. A similar narrative was shared by the majority of the respondents that Karachi is one of the significant cities of Pakistan where all the underground parties, sexual activities, and events are happening. Moreover, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region of Pakistan has also been highlighted by the respondents with a residential background of Peshawar that unfortunately, in Madrasas and outskirt areas of KPK, men have relations with other men secretly.

Lennox and Waites (2013), Nicol et al. (2018), Mugisha (2019), and Loft et al. (2022) in their research highlighted the concept of criminalization of the LGBTIQ community. Over the years, many countries have laws that consider sexual acts with the same sex as criminalized acts such as Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Africa, and Afghanistan. Moreover, these offenses are liable to harsh punishment according to the country's laws. During the phase of data collection, few respondents favored criminalization as it is destroying the cultural and societal values of Pakistan. Also, if this ideology is allowed, future generations will be devastatingly impacted

therefore, respondents suggested harsh punishment and acts of criminalization for this community.

The concept of criminalization and decriminalization both were opposed by the majority of interviewees due to their extremities as some believed criminalization is too harsh since they are human beings just like us whereas decriminalization was also opposed because it will give them freedom and liberty to do whatever they want which is again not good for the Pakistani society. Therefore, neutral grounds were suggested to either send them to rehabilitation centers, put them in jail, or throw them out of the country. The respondents were mindful of their socio-cultural and religious values, still, the majority of respondents shared similar thoughts that the LGBTIQ community should be treated as an equal citizen of Pakistan and should be given equal basic rights without any discrimination as long as it doesn't hurt anyone's sentiments also, providing special rights to them was not appreciated.

Whereas few of the respondents favored decriminalization as it is the right of everyone to express themselves the way they feel or desire. Pro-supporters of this community expressed immense disappointment in the country's laws as they believe it violates basic human rights since the members of the LGBTIQ community are humans like us, think like us, eat like us, and walk like us; the only thing different is how they feel so it shouldn't bother anyone and let them have their freedom. Vanita (2004), Baudh (2013), Mugisha (2019), Cottet and Picq (2019), Digoix (2020), and Loft et al. (2022) in their research underlined the process of decriminalization. Over the years, countries like India, Sri Lanka, Armenia, Mozambique, and other European countries have intensified the level of social acceptance towards the LGBTIQ community due to which people considered it legal and ethical to provide equal access to rights and protection to

LGBTIQ individuals. Moreover, now they have opportunities to formally register their marriage and can live together as same-sex couples.

Young respondents were well-informed about psychological health problems as respondents with another educational background rather than psychology as their field of study, also mentioned the concept of homosexuality in DSM. Respondents often categorized homosexuality and diverse gender identity as pathological mental illnesses because they believe that naturally there are only two genders and deviating from them is something abnormal. Similarly, Kim (2009), Aurat Foundation (2016), Colibri (2018), and Bass & Nagy (2020) highlighted homosexuality in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) as a psychopathology or mental illness. Later on, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed it from the DSM therefore, now people consider it normal especially in the West. However, the majority of respondents expressed disappointment that this should be a disorder as it is creating turmoil in our society and no sane person would love the same gender. Moreover, under the cultural context of Pakistan, mental health itself needs a lot of awareness and effort to be understood since people associate it with madness or being possessed by demons. Therefore, the acceptance of the LGBTIQ community requires much more effort in the long run.

The exacerbating situation of HIV cases over the years has become an alarming situation worldwide as Rajabali et al. (2008), and Sarbini and Bintang (2019) stated in their study that over recent years homosexuality escalated HIV cases, especially among gay men. Similarly in Pakistan HIV cases have increased seven times more in men than women (Gadit, 2009). The escalation of sexually transmitted diseases breaches religious values and the state's ideology creating social disorder and a threat to the country's stability that's why people hesitate in revealing their identity and cases of HIV/AIDs.

Similarly, it has been reported by most of the respondents that recent statistics have shown the rise of HIV cases due to the spread of the LGBTIQ community because they are involved in non-heterosexual activities which are problematic for their health and other people as well as they come in contact with. Moreover, trans people in Pakistan mostly indulge in activities like prostitution and sex work. National Report Pakistan (2011) highlighted that 12% of HIV prevalence is due to hijra sex workers in Karachi. However, it is not necessary that HIV spreads through sexual activity, it can be through blood transfusion, needles, mother-child contact, and sharing of cigarettes and syringes but most people only highlight sexual intercourse as a reason for the spread of HIV that is why it is a taboo in Pakistan.

Men having sex with other men known as MSM (Eaton et al., 2023) are distinct in nature from heterosexual men, and in Pakistan, it mostly includes truck drivers, drug users, prisoners, male prostitutes, migrants, and even married men having extramarital affairs (Rajabali et al., 2008). The exacerbating situation of sexually transmitted diseases globally and in Pakistan showed a rising concern among people that this community is somewhat involved in the escalation of this disease. Generally, the idea of HIV itself is stigmatized and considered taboo in Pakistan because people associate HIV as a reason for extra-marital sexual intercourse which is not always the case but in recent years the boost of homosexuality and other diverse gender identity revealed statistics that HIV is due to this community. In this regard, the majority of respondents confidently expressed that the LGBTIQ community is the main cause of the spread of HIV cases.

Thus, the rapid increase of the LGBTIQ community gave rise to various challenges in Pakistan which reflects the stigmatization and discrimination against sexual minority groups. It is a taboo in Pakistan because the beliefs of this community are against the moral, cultural, and



religious values which justifies the criticism against this community therefore, all the above-mentioned factors have been affected by this community and likewise, this community is also struggling for gaining acceptance and equal rights like all other citizens of Pakistan.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1. Summary

This current chapter sums up the main argument, conclusion, recommendations for future research, and limitations of the study. The contemporary study was aimed at exploring the perspective of young respondents on the acceptability or unacceptability of sexual minorities under the cultural, moral, and religious values of Pakistan. The respondents of various age groups and residential backgrounds interpreted different meanings and experiences towards this community. The study was imparted in two different universities of Islamabad exploring the objectives of the study including the exploration of transgender bills through the lens of the criminalization and decriminalization of this community.

Another objective was to explore the forbearance of the Aurat March challenging the cultural and moral values of Pakistani society. The true essence of the Aurat March deviated from its factual problem which was to cater to the needs of underprivileged women who had no voice against the kind of violence and inequalities they are facing. The feminist movements have integrated diverse people with self-perceived identities claiming for their equal rights and acceptance which became a controversial issue since the ideology and beliefs of this community threaten the traditional value system of Pakistani society.

The current study analyzed the whole debate of social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan through the lens of culture and religion which are prime facets of this country. Under the debate of cultural relativism, Pakistan's customs, traditions, values, and norms don't support the LGBTIQ community in any regard. Since the beliefs and thinking of this community are more Westernized in nature than related to South-Asian culture. However,

modern-day literature, art, music, and films incorporate such content which is mostly criticized by the people of Pakistan. Similar to culture, religion has its own valid standpoint that it is clearly mentioned in the Holy Quran that homosexuality is sinful and any person committing such a crime must be liable to harsh punishment. Therefore, both culture and religion are strongly opposing the existence of this community.

The legalized enactment of the transgender bill gave rise to the process of criminalization and decriminalization of this community. Respondents expressed that both processes need a neutral ground since it would be harsh and a violation of human rights if we criminalize this community whereas decriminalization would be the leniency of providing freedom and liberty to this community to do whatever they want. Therefore, this narrative is subjective in nature depending on the experience and perspective of the youth. The misinterpretation of the terms intersex and transgender in the transgender bill has been scandalous in its nature since people of Pakistan use them interchangeably and interpret them as Khawaja-Sira or Hijra which are usually referred to as a person who dresses up as female and may or may not have different genitals. Subsequently, the argument of misconception of terminology still prevails among respondents.

Moreover, over the period, the rise of social media to propagate one's values has catered to the needs of the LGBTIQ community to disclose their identity, safeguard of rights, and exhibit freedom of speech. As the Western world controls the social media platforms due to which the inclusion and acceptance of the LGBTIQ community are readily available, anyone who speaks against this community faces warnings like temporary banning of their accounts and take down of content, due to which people must follow community guidelines of such platforms. Moreover, media platforms have provided them with a safe space to share their opinion, celebrate pride marches and pride walks. Meanwhile, the mainstream media in Pakistan has a strong lobby and

PEMRA doesn't allow such content to appear on television because it's against the moral, social, cultural, and religious values of Pakistan.

Over the years, the LGBTIQ community has paved its way in different ways. The study highlighted the narrative of youth regarding the trends of escalation of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV with the rise of this community because of non-heterosexual contact although there can be other reasons for the spread of disease moreover, respondents believed that this community is facing mental health issues which is why they have identity crises and claim their self-perceived identity. Furthermore, homosexuality is no longer part of DSM which clearly signifies that Western society has legalized the LGBTIQ community, but this community requires much more effort to be accepted by the people of Pakistan.

## **6.2. Conclusion**

The aforementioned discussion entails the result of the present study by providing a comprehensive analysis of the perspective of young respondents of various age groups, different residential and educational backgrounds interpreting the social acceptance of the LGBTIQ community in Islamabad, Pakistan. Chapter four highlights the detailed socio-economic and demographic profile of the respondents (Table 4.1) interpreting their viewpoint regarding this community. This research aimed to investigate the nature of response towards the LGBTIQ community discussing overtly and covertly the cultural and religious influences. The religious notion clearly prohibits the LGBTIQ community and considers it sinful to have same-sex relations and also reviewed through the lens of the destruction of Qoum-e-lut(Rehman &Polymenopoulou, 2013).

Meanwhile, cultural values vary from contextual and societal principles depending on their morals, traditions, and norms thus over the years, all the cultures of the world have

experienced change, but the level of transformation is different for every culture such as Western societies over the period have provided acceptance to the LGBTIQ community (McCormick & Baldrige, 2019). As Tilley (2000) highlighted the significance of anthropology of the cultures, therefore the idea of cultural relativism is most suitable in this context that the inclusion of this community is not readily welcomed. The cultural values of Pakistan are considered significant in shaping people's lives. However, the acceptance of the LGBTIQ community requires endless efforts in Pakistan because the ideology of the LGBTIQ community is against the cultural, moral, and religious values of Pakistan.

The term LGBTIQ itself is an alienated concept due to which people felt cultural shock since the beliefs of this community are ominous to the cultural and religious norms of Pakistan (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013). Noticeably, although Western terms like lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer do not fit into the cultural values of Pakistan (Jabbar, 2020) however, the term intersex and transgender have deep roots (Aurat Foundation, 2016) and have always been a part of the debate for decades.

Historically, South Asia is no stranger to the concept of Khawaja-Sira and Hijra as it has always been presented in history, literature, art, music, and media so the acceptance of intersex and transgender individuals has been present to some extent (Aurat Foundation, 2016; Jabbar, 2020), but today's generation is more aware about their rights and even government of Pakistan has announced different programs and laws for intersex and transgender community (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013; Farhat et al., 2020; Islam, 2020; Gamage, 2021; Ahmed, 2022; Loft et al., 2022; Mustafa, 2022).

The contentious debate over the transgender bill which was passed in 2018 highlighted the misrepresentation of Western terminologies. Moreover, it instigated the issue of giving rights to

everyone with a self-perceived identity(Ahmad, 2020; Islam, 2020; Jabbar, 2020).The misunderstanding of terminologies intersex and transgender remains there among young respondents and during the data collection they often used them interchangeably. The current research disclosed the frustration of young respondents on the ideology of the LGBTIQ community as it is violating their religious, moral, and cultural values which would further destroy their future generations since the concept of modernization and Western societies attracts young minds due to which majority of the respondents explicitly criticized such notions and claimed not to accept such thing any time soon.

Over the years,the trend of modern movements and social media paved the way for the inclusion of the community. Extravagant movements like Women's marches have portrayed their own agendas rather than working for underprivileged women and also integrated issues of the LGBTIQ community with them (Farhet et al., 2020; Khushbakht & Sultana, 2020; Batool et al., 2022; Tyson, 2023). Aurat March has played a huge role in highlighting issues of womxn in Pakistan, here x factor incorporates all self-perceived identities to come forward and ask for their rights (Saigol& Chaudhary, 2020). As we move forward into the acceptance of this community, media representation has been even more than ever before (Gerbner, 1969; Hart, 2000; Fox & Ralston, 2016). Meanwhile, mainstream media in Pakistan doesn't allow any content to be displayed which violates the communal and religious guidelines. Movie Joyland was highlighted by several respondents in promotion of the LGBTIQ community later, it was banned by the PEMRA (Ali, 2020; Guardian, 2022).

The marginalization of sexual minorities has led to the escalation of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDs.Moreover, the perception of HIV has always been related to sexual intercourse which is not always the case thus this community faces more stigmatization than

other minority groups in Pakistan (Rajabali et al., 2008; Gadit, 2009). People of Pakistan lack mental health awareness therefore, the association of possession of demons or madness is associated with this community. Moreover, DSM no longer considers homosexuality as a mental disorder therefore, Western societies consider it normal, but it is not normal in the context of Pakistani society (Kim, 2009; Bass & Nagy, 2020).

Furthermore, the study highlighted the aspect of criminalization and decriminalization of the LGBTIQ community under the constitutional laws, and cultural and religious values of Pakistan (Loft et al., 2022). Young respondents were knowledgeable about the concept of criminality consequently, both criminalization and decriminalization are considered extreme choices for this community, therefore, neutral grounds were suggested. The concepts of acceptability and unacceptability are subjective in nature due to people's perspectives and ideologies. However, the majority always wins which certainly shows the respondents opposed this community.

### **6.3. Limitations of the study**

Due to the nature of this research, time and resources were somewhat limited, therefore, this study was conducted with several delimitations. Geographically, this study was conducted in Islamabad, Pakistan with the intention to collect data from the youth of Islamabad however, the study was limited to just one place rather than exploring the narrative of youth belonging to other places in Pakistan. In addition, respondents of the study comprised just youth from two universities of Islamabad to see the difference of opinion therefore, other age groups weren't incorporated since the nature of the study needed to explore the perspective of youth because that is the future and most recent generation whose opinion matters the most. Finally, no one under the age of 18 and above 30 were incorporated in the research.

Moreover, this research was limited by the inaccessibility of informants due to the hesitation of respondents to speak about controversial topics which made them reluctant to share their narrative. Additionally, a few of them were uncomfortable with being recorded and other privacy issues. Furthermore, this research cannot be generalized to the perspective of overall youth but rather is a small insight into the perspective that this population has to offer.

#### **6.4. Recommendations for Future Research**

The advent of modernization and Western culture has paved the way for the LGBTIQ community in Pakistan leading to multiple challenges which require in-depth longitudinal study rather than a cross-sectional study. Moreover, the inclusivity of LGBTIQ members in this study to understand their narrative on social acceptance in Pakistan is very crucial. Religious aspect under Shariah law requires deeper insight. Furthermore, the sample size should be broader to incorporate older and younger generation's comparative analysis on this debate. The legislative aspects regarding their rights, acceptance, criminalization, decriminalization, bills, and lawsshould be integrated into future studies to have more legal facets to the study.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### REFERENCES

- Ahmad, J. (2022, August 25). *Disparities between civil law and criminal law: A cohort study*. International Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution. <https://www.globalscienceresearchjournals.org/articles/disparities-between-civil-law-and-criminal-law-a-cohort-study-90636.html>
- Ahmed, F. (2022, September 20). LGBTQ Bill Pakistan 2022: All you need to know about Transgender Rights Act Pakistan. Retrieved from DNP: <https://www.dailynationpakistan.com/lgbtq-bill-pakistan-2022-all-you-need-to-know-about-transgender-rights-act-pakistan/>.
- Alam, I., Warraich, S. K., & Rehman, N. U. (2019). Issues and management of transgender community in Pakistan: a case study of Lahore. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 3(2), 761-770.
- Ali, H. (2022, December 19). "we are lying to ourselves": Ban on LGBTQ film sparks debate in Pakistan. *The Christian Science Monitor*. <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2022/1219/We-are-lying-to-ourselves-Ban-on-LGBTQ-film-sparks-debate-in-Pakistan>
- Ali, I., Cheema, R. M., & Dang, Q. (2020). Representation of Anti-Islamic perspective: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Aurat March (2019-2020) in Pakistan. *Ilkogretim Online*, 19(3), 2426-2435.
- Arifin, S. R. M. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International journal of care scholars*, 1(2), 30-33.

- Azhar, M. (2013, August 26). *Gay Pakistan: Where sex is available and relationships are difficult*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/23811826>
- Bass, B., & Nagy, H. (2020). Cultural competence in the care of LGBTQ patients.
- Batool, F. (2022). BACKLASHES TO AURAT MARCH IN PAKISTAN: OPINIONS OF ORGANIZERS AND OPINION LEADERS. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 4(03), 17-28.
- Baudh, S. (2013). Decriminalization of consensual same-sex sexual acts in the South Asian Commonwealth: struggles in contexts. *Human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity in the Commonwealth: Struggles for decriminalization and change*, 287-312. [https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/4824/12/10Baudh\\_DecriminalisationSameSexSouthAsia.pdf](https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/4824/12/10Baudh_DecriminalisationSameSexSouthAsia.pdf)
- Bello, S. I. (2012). The Punishment of homosexuality in Islamic contemporary world: Malaysia, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia as a case study. Available at SSRN: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2183622>
- BERA. (2018, June 20). *Ethical guidelines for educational research, Fourth edition (2018)*. ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH. <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>
- Bhutto, S. H. (2008). Pakistan\_2008\_National\_Youth\_policy.pdf. Retrieved May 6, 2023, from [https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Pakistan\\_2008\\_National\\_Youth\\_policy.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Pakistan_2008_National_Youth_policy.pdf)
- Bosse, J. D., & Chiodo, L. (2016). It is complicated: Gender and sexual orientation identity in LGBTQ youth. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 25(23-24), 3665-3675. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13419>

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis*. American Psychological Association.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative research in Sport, Exercise, and Health*, 11(4), 589-597.
- Calzo, J. P., & Ward, L. M. (2009). Media exposure and viewers' attitudes toward homosexuality: Evidence for mainstreaming or resonance? *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 53(2), 280–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150902908049>
- Cammett, A. (2009). Queer lockdown: Coming to terms with the ongoing criminalization of LGBTQ communities. *The Scholar and Feminist Online, Barnard Center for Research on Women*, 7(3). <https://scholars.law.unlv.edu/facpub/613/>
- Chbat, M., Pagé, G., Côté, I., & Blais, M. (2023). Resistance strategies and identity reappropriation of LGBTQ+ migrants in Québec. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-023-01039-3>
- Chung, S. K. (2007). Media literacy art education: Deconstructing lesbian and gay stereotypes in the media. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 26(1), 98-107.
- Colibri, G. (2018, October 26). Being gay in Pakistan: A story from Lahore. Retrieved from SOGICA: [https://www.sogica.org/en/life\\_stories/being-gay-in-pakistan-what-a-miserable-and-hard-life/](https://www.sogica.org/en/life_stories/being-gay-in-pakistan-what-a-miserable-and-hard-life/)
- Cottet, C., & Picq, M. L. (Eds.). (2019). *Sexuality and translation in world politics*. Bristol: E-International Relations. <https://www.e-ir.info/publication/sexuality-and-translation-in-world-politics/>

- Cynthia, E. 2017. *The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging the Persistence of Patriarchy*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Dawadi, S. (2021). Thematic analysis approach: A step by step guide for ELT research practitioners. *Journal of NELTA*, 25(1-2), 62-71.
- Demeter, T., & Bratucu, G. (2014). Typologies of youth tourism. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Economic Sciences. Series V*, 7(1), 115.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263888606\\_Typologies\\_of\\_Youth\\_Tourism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263888606_Typologies_of_Youth_Tourism)
- Digoix, M. (2020). Same-sex families and legal recognition in Europe. *Springer Nature*, 24, 178.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37054-1>
- Dovidio, J. F., Hewstone, M., Glick, P., & Esses, V. M. (2010). *Handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination*. London, UK: Sage.
- Dovidio, J., Hewstone, M., Glick, P., & Esses, V. (1970, January 1). [PDF] *Prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination: Theoretical and empirical overview: Semantic scholar*. [PDF] Prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination: Theoretical and empirical overview | Semantic Scholar. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Prejudice%2C-stereotyping-and-discrimination%3A-and-Dovidio-Hewstone/b1cea4d91d9593ba5b9790c8159bf35004cd8ac5>
- Dow, B. (2001). Ellen, television, and the politics of gay and lesbian visibility. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 18(2), 123-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180128077>
- Eaton, A. D., Scheadler, T. R., Bradley, C., McInroy, L. B., Beer, O. W., Beckwell, E., ... & Shuper, P. A. (2023). Identity development, attraction, and behaviour of heterosexually

- identified men who have sex with men: scoping review protocol. *Systematic Reviews*, 12(1), 184.
- Ellis, P. (2019). Changing the world through education—how Nelson Mandela created the conditions for success. *Cambridge Assessment International Education*.
- EMCDDA. (2001, November 19). Decriminalisation in Europe? Recent developments in legal approaches to drug use: an ELDD comparative study. Law topics page. [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/law\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/law_en)
- Erickson, S. E., Dal Cin, S., & Byl, H. (2019). An experimental examination of binge watching and narrative engagement. *Social Sciences*, 8(1), 19.
- Farhat, S. N., Abdullah, M. D., Hali, S. M., & Iftikhar, H. (2020). Transgender law in Pakistan: Some key issues. *Policy Perspectives*, 17(1), 7-33.
- Few-Demo, A. L., Humble, A. M., Curran, M. A., & L'oyd, S. A. (2016). Queer theory, intersectionality, and LGBT-parent families: Transformative critical pedagogy in family theory. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 8(1), 74-94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12127>
- Flores, A. R. (2019). Social acceptance of LGBT people in 174 countries: 1981 to 2017. *The Williams Institute, Los Angeles, CA*, 1-50. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5qs218xd>
- Foundation, A. (2016). Silent No More Transgender Community in Pakistan A Research Study. *USAID*. Retrieved December, 27, 2021.

- Fox, J., & Ralston, R. (2016). Queer identity online: Informal learning and teaching experiences of LGBTQ individuals on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *65*, 635-642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.06.009>
- Gadit, A. A. M. (2009). 'Homosexuality: are we adequately equipped to address this issue in clinical practice?'. *JPMA. The Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*, *59*(3), 185-186. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19288953/>
- Gamage, N. D. M. (2021). *Butterflies Under the Rainbow Sky: Discrimination and Criminalisation of the LGBTIQ Community in Sri Lanka* (Doctoral dissertation, Flinders University, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.). <https://flex.flinders.edu.au/file/ba973420-b53d-4a01-b507-579e9f640c7a/1/MelegodaGamage2020%20Librarycopy.pdf.pdf>
- Gedro, J., & Mizzi, R. C. (2014). Feminist theory and queer theory: Implications for HRD research and practice. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *16*(4), 445-456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422314543820>
- Gerbner, G. (1969). Toward “cultural indicators”: The analysis of mass mediated public message systems. *AV Communication Review*, *17*(2), 137-148.
- GLAAD (2021). Network Responsibility Index. - Where we are on tv report - 2021. Retrieved from Glaad: <https://www.glaad.org/whereweareontv21>.
- Gonta, G., Hansen, S., Fagin, C., & Fong, J. (2017). Changing media and changing minds: media exposure and viewer attitudes toward homosexuality. *Pepperdine Journal of Communication Research*, *5*(1), 5.

- Grooms, J. (2020). No home and no acceptance: Exploring the intersectionality of sexual/gender identities (LGBTQ) and race in the foster care system. *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 47(2), 177-193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034644620911381>
- Gross, L. (2005). The past and the future of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender studies. *Journal of Communication*, 55(3), 508-528.
- Guardian. (2022) "Joyland: Pakistan bans Oscar contender film about trans love affair". Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/14/joyland-pakistan-bans-oscar-contender-film-about-trans-love-affair>.
- Hailey, J., Burton, W., & Arscott, J. (2020). We are family: Chosen and created families as a protective factor against racialized trauma and anti-LGBTQ oppression among African American sexual and gender minority youth. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 16(2), 176-191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1724133>
- Hart, K. (2000). Representing gay men on American television. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 9 (1), 59-79. <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.0901.59>
- Hashmi, S. T. (2020). Pakistan's Cultural Identity in the Era of Netflix: Perspectives of EMU's Pakistani Students. Master's thesis, Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU).<http://hdl.handle.net/11129/5489>.
- Henne, K. (2018). Criminalization. *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1439>
- Hunt, J., & Moodie-Mills, A. (2012). The unfair criminalization of gay and transgender youth: An overview of the experiences of LGBT youth in the juvenile justice system. *Center for*

*American Progress*, 29(1), 1-12. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-unfair-criminalization-of-gay-and-transgender-youth/>

Hussain, S. (2023). Hijra, trans, and the grids of “passing”. *Sexualities*, 13634607231157071.

Iqbal, K. (2020, 20 September). Court disposes of same-sex marriage case. Retrieved from The International News: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/717600-court-disposes-of-same-sex-marriage-case>

Islam, S. (2020). The transgender community and the right to equality in Pakistan: Review of the Transgender Persons Act 2018. *LUMS LJ*, 7, 208.

Jabbar, M. (2020). *HOW GAY AND LESBIAN CULTURES ARE PRESENTED IN SOUTH ASIA, AND HOW THEY CAN BE UNDERSTOOD DISTINCTLY FROM WESTERN IDEAS*.

Jaffer, A. (2022). Embodying sufism: the spiritual culture of third gender (khwaja sira) communities in Pakistan. *South Asia@ LSE*.

Jaffer, S., Bibi, Dr. A., Arzoo, H., Siddiqui, Mukhtar, M. W., Ahmad, W., Haroon, Dr. Z., & Khan, B. (2020). Transgender Act 2018: Islamic Perspective to Interpret Statute for the Protection of Rights and SocioPsychological Impacts on Pakistani Society. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 14(10), 1283–1299. [https://www.ijicc.net/images/Vol\\_14/Iss\\_10/17140\\_Khan\\_2020\\_E1\\_R.pdf](https://www.ijicc.net/images/Vol_14/Iss_10/17140_Khan_2020_E1_R.pdf)

Jenner, M. (2018). *Netflix and the Re-invention of Television*. Springer. Cham: International Publishing AG.

Khushbakht, S. M., & Sultana, M. (2020). The Women Activism in Pakistan: An Analysis of ‘Aurat March. *Al-Milal: Journal of Religion and Thought*, 2(2), 50-69.



- Kim, R. (2009). A Report on the Status of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People in Education: Stepping Out of the Closet, into the Light. *National Education Association Research Department*.
- Knee, E. (2019). Gay, but not inclusive: Boundary maintenance in an LGBTQ space. *Leisure Sciences*, 41(6), 499-515. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2018.1441767>
- Kusumasondjaja, S., Shanka, T., & Marchegiani, C. (2012). Credibility of online reviews and initial trust: The roles of reviewer's identity and review valence. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 18(3), 185-195.
- Lennox, C., & Waites, M. (2013). Human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity in the Commonwealth: from history and law to developing activism and transnational dialogues. *Human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity in the Commonwealth: Struggles for decriminalisation and change*, 1-59. <https://doi.org/10.14296/518.9781912250134>
- Loft, P., Curtis, J., Mills, C., BUTCHARD, PATRICK., & Gadd, E. (2022). *LGBT+ rights in south and central Asia*. House of Commons. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9508/>
- Longe, O. (2022, March 11). *Consecutive sampling: Definition, examples, pros & cons*. Formplus. <https://www.formpl.us/blog/consecutive-sampling>
- Luo, N. (2020). Decriminalizing survival: Policy platform and polling on the decriminalization of sex work. *Data for Progress*. <https://www.filesforprogress.org/memos/decriminalizing-sex-work.pdf>

Maham, T. (2021, 26 December). *List of CDA Sectors in Islamabad*. Retrieved from Graana.com:

<https://www.graana.com/blog/list-of-cda-sectors-in-islamabad/>

Marshall, D. (2016). Reading queer television: Some notes on method. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 38(1), 85-101.

McCormick, A., & Baldrige, S. (2019). Family acceptance and faith: Understanding the acceptance processes of parents of LGBTQ youth. *Social Work and Christianity*, 46(1), 32-40.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2220747107?parentSessionId=KEWNv8QH%2FOMDr1IRW%2BxMw1O8H6Vmywomnj3iDdazdik%3D>

Morrison, K. (2022). Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in the world of work: a learning guide.

<https://policycommons.net/artifacts/3357241/inclusion-of-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-intersex-and-queer-lgbtq-persons-in-the-world-of-work/>

Mugisha, F. (2019). India and the global fight for LGBT rights. *Foreign policy*, (231), 71-74.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/gt-essay/india-and-the-global-fight-for-lgbt-rights/>

Munawar, K., & Siraj, S. A. (2022). Problematic symptoms among binge watchers in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan: analysis from uses, gratification, and dependency perspectives. *Media Asia*, 49(4) 333-352.

Mustafa, D. K. (2022, August 13). *LGBTQ and intersex communities in Pakistan forge ahead*.

Retrieved from Washington Blade America's LGBT News Source:  
<https://www.washingtonblade.com/2022/08/13/lgbtq-and-intersex-communities-in-pakistan-forge-ahead/>

- Nabila, N. (2020). *Homonormativity In Becky Albertalli And Adam Silvera's What If It's Us (2018)* (Doctoral dissertation, UNIVERSITAS AIRLANGGA).
- Nations, U. (n.d.). Youth. United Nations; United Nations. Retrieved April 6, 2023, from <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>
- Netflix (2021). Netflix Annual Report. <https://www.annreports.com/netflix/netflix-ar-2021.pdf>.
- Netzley, S. B. (2010). Visibility that demystifies: Gays, gender, and sex on television. *Journal of homosexuality*, 57(8), 968-986.
- Nicol, N., Jjuuko, A., Lusimbo, R., Mulé, N. J., Ursel, S., Wahab, A., & Waugh, P. (2018). *Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights: Neo) colonialism, Neoliberalism, Resistance and Hope*. University of London Press. <https://humanities-digital-library.org/index.php/hdl/catalog/book/envisioning>
- Ortiz, D. R. (1993). Creating controversy: Essentialism and constructivism and the politics of gay identity. *Virginia Law Review*, 79(7), 1833-1857. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1073388>
- Quinn, E. (2020, May 29). Minority Stress and LGBTQ+ Patients' Mental Health. Retrieved from NATA: <https://www.nata.org/blog/elizabeth-quinn/minority-stress-and-lgbtq-patients%E2%80%99-mental-health>
- Rajabali, A., Khan, S., Warraich, H. J., Khanani, M. R., & Ali, S. H. (2008). HIV and homosexuality in Pakistan. *The Lancet infectious diseases*, 8(8), 511-515. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(08\)70183-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(08)70183-X)
- Rashid, A., & Rashid, U. (2022). Constitutional and Legal Guarantees for Transgender in Pakistan: Reforms and Failures in Law. In *Towards Gender Equality in Law: An Analysis*

- of State Failures from a Global Perspective* (pp. 79-110). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Redding, J. A. (2022). Islamic challenges to Pakistan's transgender rights law.
- Rehman, J., & Polymenopoulou, E. (2013). Is green a part of the rainbow: Sharia, homosexuality, and LGBT rights in the Muslim world? *Fordham Int'l LJ*, 37(1), 53.  
<https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2322&context=ilj>
- Riaz, M. M. A., & Awan, M. M. (2023). Transgender rights in Pakistan: implications of Federal Shariat Court ruling. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 10(8), e20.
- Roggemans, L., Spruyt, B., Droogenbroeck, F. V., & Keppens, G. (2015). Religion and negative attitudes towards homosexuals: An analysis of urban young people and their attitudes towards homosexuality. *Young*, 23(3), 254-276.
- Rutledge, P. B., & Hogg, J. L. C. (2020). In-Depth Interviews. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*, 1-7.
- Saigol, R., & Chaudhary, N. U. (2020). *Contradictions and ambiguities of feminism in Pakistan: Exploring the fourth wave*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Pakistan Office.  
<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/pakistan/17334.pdf>
- Salam, H. A. (2022, August 16). *Dr Mehrub Moiz "disinvited" from ted x ISL for being transgendered*. The Pakistan Daily. <https://thepakistandaily.com/dr-mehrub-moiz-disinvited-from-ted-x-isl-for-being-transgendered>

- Sarbini, F., & Bintang P. Has, M. W. T. (2019). Depok and its effort to criminalize the LGBT community. *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 25(3), 520-526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2019.1708084>
- Saria, V. (2021). *Hijras, lovers, brothers: Surviving sex and poverty in rural India*. Fordham University Press.
- Seif, R. (2017). The media representation of fictional gay and lesbian characters on television: A qualitative analysis of US TV-series regarding heteronormativity. Retrieved from <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1111368/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.
- Shirazi, Q. (2020, July 16). Gender test ordered in alleged same-sex marriage. Retrieved from The Express Tribune: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2255108/gender-test-ordered-in-alleged-same-sex-marriage>
- Showkat, N., & Parveen, H. (2017). Non-probability and probability sampling. *Media and Communications Study*, 6(1), 1-9.
- Shugart, H. A. (2003). Reinventing Privilege: The New (Gay) Man in Contemporary Popular Media. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 20(1), 67-91.
- Suleman, M., & Zehra, F. (2021). A contemporary version of tv in Pakistan: Analysis of Netflix. *Journal of Mass Communication Department, Dept of Mass Communication, University of Karachi*, 24. <https://jmcd-uok.com/index.php/jmcd/article/view/170>.
- Taylor, P. (2013). *A survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, experiences and values in changing times*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/>

- Tenny, S., Brannan, J. M., & Brannan, G. D. (2017). Qualitative study.
- Thomson, K. (2021). An Analysis of LGBTQ+ Representation in Television and Film. *Bridges: An Undergraduate Journal of Contemporary Connections*, 5(1), 7.
- Tilley, J. J. (2000). Cultural relativism. *Hum. Rts. Q.*, 22, 501.
- Travaglini, L. E., Himelhoch, S. S., & Fang, L. J. (2018). HIV stigma and its relation to mental, physical and social health among Black women living with HIV/AIDS. *AIDS and Behavior*, 22, 3783-3794.
- Tyson, L. (2023). *Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide.*(2) Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203479698>
- Vanita, R. (2004). " Wedding of two souls": same-sex marriage and Hindu traditions. *Journal of feminist studies in Religion*, 20(2), 119-135. <https://doi.org/10.2979/FSR.2004.20.2.119>
- Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. *BMC medical research methodology*, 18, 1-18.
- Wall, S. (2016). "Oh, he's gay!" The Perception of Gay Men of their Portrayal in Television and Film (Doctoral dissertation). <http://hdl.handle.net/10222/71820>.
- Wheeler, H. (2013). *Sexuality & religion: how devoutly religious lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals manage the relationship between their sexuality and their religion*. Arizona State University.

## **ANNEXURE -A**

### **Interview Guide**

#### **Section A: Socio-Economic Characteristics**

1. Age of the Respondents \_\_\_\_\_
2. Residential Background \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
4. Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_
5. Educational Attainment (in Completed Years) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Program Enrolled In? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Family Structure \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Section B: General Questions Related to the LGBTIQ Community.**

8. What is your understanding of the term LGBTIQ?
9. Do you know the difference between transgender and intersex individuals?
10. Do you believe LGBTIQ should be given equal rights and status as other citizens? Please explain.
11. Have you ever encountered any LGBTIQ individuals personally or know through mutual friends or social media?
12. Are you following any LGBTIQ personalities on social media?

#### **Section C: Questions Regarding LGBTIQ and Aurat March.**

13. How would you define Aurat March in the context of Pakistan, and how has it integrated LGBTIQ crises into its activism?

14. Do you think Aurat March is playing a role in the acceptance and inclusion of this community in Pakistan?

15. What are some potential future trends in advocating LGBTIQ rights in Aurat March?

**Section D: Questions Concerning the Rights of the LGBTIQ Community and Change in Pakistani Culture.**

16. What are some cultural or religious beliefs in Pakistan that might influence people's attitudes about LGBTIQ people?

17. How do Pakistani literature, music, or films depict LGBTIQ individuals?

18. How would you define social media in promoting the LGBTIQ community and influencing public perception towards LGBTIQ rights and equality?

19. How do you think bloggers and influencers contribute to the acceptance of the LGBTIQ community?

20. What institutions do you think help the LGBTIQ community to engage in gatherings, arrange private parties, and form online and offline groups?

21. Do you believe homosexuality and diverse gender identity are mental health problems?

**Section E: Questions Regarding the Relationship between the Spread of STDs such as HIV and the LGBTIQ Community.**

22. Do you believe the escalation of HIV cases is associated with the rise of this community?

23. Are LGBTIQ individuals more likely to develop HIV than the general population? If so, what elements lead to this elevated risk?

24. Does the LGBTIQ community specifically suffer difficulties or obstacles when trying to access services for HIV prevention, testing, treatment, etc.?



**Section F: Questions Related to Criminalization and Decriminalization of the LGBTIQ Community.**

25. Do you believe being an LGBTIQ member is a criminal offense or otherwise?
26. What effects does the criminalization of the LGBTIQ community have on human rights and general well-being?
27. Do you know about the legal rights in the constitutional laws of Pakistan for the LGBTIQ community?
28. Do you know the kind of punishments that are mentioned in the constitutional laws of Pakistan against the LGBTIQ community?
29. What part do international organizations and human rights agencies play in combating the criminalization of LGBTIQ individuals?
30. How would you like to explain the transgender bill that was passed in 2018 which was hyped up?
31. Do you believe the transgender bill is a disguise aiming to provide rights to the LGBTIQ community?
32. Would you like to explain your viewpoint regarding the decriminalization of LGBTIQ in different parts of the world?
33. What ways or punishment do you think should be given if this should be criminalized? If not how to decriminalize this process?
34. How does this community impact the future of Pakistan? Is this challenging our ideological roots or otherwise? Please explain.

**Thank you for your time!**

**ANNEXURE -B**  
**PLAGIARISM REPORT**

Aimen

ORIGINALITY REPORT

**9**%

SIMILARITY INDEX

**8**%

INTERNET SOURCES

**3**%

PUBLICATIONS

**3**%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<a href="http://pr.hec.gov.pk">pr.hec.gov.pk</a> Internet Source	<b>1</b> %
<b>2</b>	Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan Student Paper	<b>1</b> %
<b>3</b>	<a href="http://repository.unair.ac.id">repository.unair.ac.id</a> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1</b> %
<b>4</b>	<a href="http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu">ir.lawnet.fordham.edu</a> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1</b> %
<b>5</b>	<a href="http://www.scribd.com">www.scribd.com</a> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1</b> %
<b>6</b>	<a href="http://www.ilo.org">www.ilo.org</a> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1</b> %
<b>7</b>	<a href="http://flex.flinders.edu.au">flex.flinders.edu.au</a> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1</b> %
<b>8</b>	<a href="http://link.springer.com">link.springer.com</a> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1</b> %
<b>9</b>	Firmansyah Sarbini, Muh. Wildan Teddy Bintang P. Has. "Depok and its effort to	<b>&lt;1</b> %

criminalise the LGBT community", Australian  
Journal of Human Rights, 2020

Publication

---

10	<a href="http://af.org.pk">af.org.pk</a> Internet Source	<1 %
11	<a href="http://www.grin.com">www.grin.com</a> Internet Source	<1 %
12	Submitted to University of Bradford Student Paper	<1 %
13	<a href="http://www.dailynationpakistan.com">www.dailynationpakistan.com</a> Internet Source	<1 %
14	Submitted to Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola Student Paper	<1 %
15	<a href="http://archive.org">archive.org</a> Internet Source	<1 %
16	<a href="http://dokumen.pub">dokumen.pub</a> Internet Source	<1 %
17	<a href="http://www.tribune.com.ng">www.tribune.com.ng</a> Internet Source	<1 %
18	<a href="http://sahsol.lums.edu.pk">sahsol.lums.edu.pk</a> Internet Source	<1 %
19	Submitted to Brunel University Student Paper	<1 %

---

20	Dentato, Michael P.. "Social Work Practice with the LGBTQ+ Community", Social Work Practice with the LGBTQ+ Community, 2022 Publication	<1 %
21	Mehr Muhammad Adeel Riaz, Mehrub Moiz Awan. "Transgender rights in Pakistan: implications of Federal Shariat Court ruling", The Lancet Psychiatry, 2023 Publication	<1 %
22	environment.gov.pk Internet Source	<1 %
23	www.mdpi.com Internet Source	<1 %
24	Submitted to University of Portsmouth Student Paper	<1 %
25	repository.smuc.edu.et Internet Source	<1 %
26	research-repository.griffith.edu.au Internet Source	<1 %
27	Submitted to Coventry University Student Paper	<1 %
28	content.unops.org Internet Source	<1 %
29	foreignpolicy.com Internet Source	<1 %

30	<a href="http://meral.edu.mm">meral.edu.mm</a> Internet Source	<1 %
31	Submitted to Unizin, LLC Student Paper	<1 %
32	Submitted to Virginia Community College System Student Paper	<1 %
33	<a href="http://www.grrjournal.com">www.grrjournal.com</a> Internet Source	<1 %
34	Submitted to University of Venda Student Paper	<1 %
35	<a href="http://academic.oup.com">academic.oup.com</a> Internet Source	<1 %
36	<a href="http://econstor.eu">econstor.eu</a> Internet Source	<1 %
37	<a href="http://jyx.jyu.fi">jyx.jyu.fi</a> Internet Source	<1 %
38	<a href="http://repository.sustech.edu">repository.sustech.edu</a> Internet Source	<1 %
39	<a href="http://www.nacsw.org">www.nacsw.org</a> Internet Source	<1 %
40	Submitted to Hong Kong Baptist University Student Paper	<1 %
41	Submitted to Indiana Wesleyan University	

	Student Paper	<1 %
42	Submitted to University of Baltimore Student Paper	<1 %
43	ir.jkuat.ac.ke Internet Source	<1 %
44	www.theses.fr Internet Source	<1 %
45	"B328 session 11 marketing research I WEB098691", Open University Publication	<1 %
46	legalserviceindia.com Internet Source	<1 %
47	ojs.sbbwu.edu.pk Internet Source	<1 %
48	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
49	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
50	Submitted to Karachi American School Student Paper	<1 %
51	Submitted to University of Greenwich Student Paper	<1 %
52	www.adb.org Internet Source	

---

		<1 %
53	<a href="http://www.zora.uzh.ch">www.zora.uzh.ch</a> Internet Source	<1 %
54	Submitted to Kaplan College Student Paper	<1 %
55	Submitted to Kaukauna High School Student Paper	<1 %
56	<a href="http://core.ac.uk">core.ac.uk</a> Internet Source	<1 %
57	<a href="http://etd.uwc.ac.za">etd.uwc.ac.za</a> Internet Source	<1 %
58	<a href="http://rune.une.edu.au">rune.une.edu.au</a> Internet Source	<1 %
59	Submitted to Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Student Paper	<1 %
60	Submitted to University of Birmingham Student Paper	<1 %
61	Submitted to University of Essex Student Paper	<1 %
62	<a href="http://ir-library.ku.ac.ke">ir-library.ku.ac.ke</a> Internet Source	<1 %
63	<a href="http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk">sas-space.sas.ac.uk</a> Internet Source	

---

		<1 %
64	Goodhart, Michael. "Human Rights: Politics and Practice", Human Rights: Politics and Practice, 2016 Publication	<1 %
65	authspot.com Internet Source	<1 %
66	energy.soton.ac.uk Internet Source	<1 %
67	genderlinks.org.za Internet Source	<1 %
68	vdocument.in Internet Source	<1 %
69	www.drugsandalcohol.ie Internet Source	<1 %
70	www.emeraldinsight.com Internet Source	<1 %
71	www.ilkogretim-online.org Internet Source	<1 %
72	www.leagle.com Internet Source	<1 %
73	www.readkong.com Internet Source	<1 %



74	<a href="http://www.sciedupress.com">www.sciedupress.com</a> Internet Source	<1 %
75	<a href="http://hrcp-web.org">hrcp-web.org</a> Internet Source	<1 %
76	<a href="http://library.oapen.org">library.oapen.org</a> Internet Source	<1 %
77	<a href="http://red.mnstate.edu">red.mnstate.edu</a> Internet Source	<1 %
78	<a href="http://sro.sussex.ac.uk">sro.sussex.ac.uk</a> Internet Source	<1 %
79	"Gender-Competent Legal Education", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2023 Publication	<1 %
80	Elisabeth Dromer, Olivier Ferlatte, Trevor Goodyear, David J. Kinitz, Travis Salway. "Overcoming Conversion Therapy: A Qualitative Investigation of Experiences of Survivors", SSM - Qualitative Research in Health, 2022 Publication	<1 %
81	<a href="http://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk">blogs.glowscotland.org.uk</a> Internet Source	<1 %
82	<a href="http://ebin.pub">ebin.pub</a> Internet Source	<1 %

83	<a href="http://eprints.utar.edu.my">eprints.utar.edu.my</a> Internet Source	<1 %
84	<a href="http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke:8080">erepository.uonbi.ac.ke:8080</a> Internet Source	<1 %
85	<a href="http://etd.uum.edu.my">etd.uum.edu.my</a> Internet Source	<1 %
86	<a href="http://etda.libraries.psu.edu">etda.libraries.psu.edu</a> Internet Source	<1 %
87	<a href="http://jostip.utm.my">jostip.utm.my</a> Internet Source	<1 %
88	<a href="http://mafiadoc.com">mafiadoc.com</a> Internet Source	<1 %
89	<a href="http://open.metu.edu.tr">open.metu.edu.tr</a> Internet Source	<1 %
90	<a href="http://rulrepository.ru.ac.bd">rulrepository.ru.ac.bd</a> Internet Source	<1 %
91	<a href="http://scholar.sun.ac.za">scholar.sun.ac.za</a> Internet Source	<1 %
92	<a href="http://scholars.law.unlv.edu">scholars.law.unlv.edu</a> Internet Source	<1 %
93	<a href="http://scimatic.org">scimatic.org</a> Internet Source	<1 %
94	<a href="http://slidelegend.com">slidelegend.com</a> Internet Source	<1 %

95 [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net) <1 %  
Internet Source

---

96 [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) <1 %  
Internet Source

---

97 [www.thenews.com.pk](http://www.thenews.com.pk) <1 %  
Internet Source

---

98 Katherine R. Allen. "Feminist theory, method, and praxis: Toward a critical consciousness for family and close relationship scholars", *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 2022 <1 %  
Publication

---

99 LexisNexis <1 %  
Publication

---

100 [archined.ined.fr](http://archined.ined.fr) <1 %  
Internet Source

---

101 [aura.antioch.edu](http://aura.antioch.edu) <1 %  
Internet Source

---

102 [digitalcommons.unf.edu](http://digitalcommons.unf.edu) <1 %  
Internet Source

---

103 [dtp.vic.gov.au](http://dtp.vic.gov.au) <1 %  
Internet Source

---

104 [eprints.gla.ac.uk](http://eprints.gla.ac.uk) <1 %  
Internet Source

---

[freessaywriter.net](http://freessaywriter.net)

105	Internet Source	<1 %
106	<a href="http://genus.springeropen.com">genus.springeropen.com</a> Internet Source	<1 %
107	<a href="http://ideapublishers.org">ideapublishers.org</a> Internet Source	<1 %
108	<a href="http://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu">jscholarship.library.jhu.edu</a> Internet Source	<1 %
109	<a href="http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk">opendocs.ids.ac.uk</a> Internet Source	<1 %
110	<a href="http://opus.lib.uts.edu.au">opus.lib.uts.edu.au</a> Internet Source	<1 %
111	<a href="http://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz">ourarchive.otago.ac.nz</a> Internet Source	<1 %
112	<a href="http://popdesenvolvimento.org">popdesenvolvimento.org</a> Internet Source	<1 %
113	<a href="http://scholar.uwindsor.ca">scholar.uwindsor.ca</a> Internet Source	<1 %
114	<a href="http://torgnysegerstedt.se">torgnysegerstedt.se</a> Internet Source	<1 %
115	<a href="http://www.lib.eduhk.hk">www.lib.eduhk.hk</a> Internet Source	<1 %
116	<a href="http://www.modul.ac.at">www.modul.ac.at</a> Internet Source	<1 %

---

117 [www.tara.tcd.ie](http://www.tara.tcd.ie) <1%  
Internet Source

---

118 Moeckli, Daniel, Shah, Sangeeta, Sivakumaran, Sandesh. "International Human Rights Law", International Human Rights Law, 2022 <1%  
Publication

---

119 [eprints.kingston.ac.uk](http://eprints.kingston.ac.uk) <1%  
Internet Source

---

Exclude quotes Off

Exclude matches Off

Exclude bibliography On