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Creators	Qadir, Farhan, Basheer, Muhammad Farhan and Chaudhry, Shafaq

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Transgender Entrepreneurs are Paving the Path of Social Entrepreneurship: Exploring Motivators of Entrepreneurial Intent

Mr. Farhan Qadir

Lahore Business School, University of Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan

farhan.qadir@hotmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Farhan Basheer

Lahore Business School, University of Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan

farhan.basheer@lbs.uol.edu.pk

Dr. Shafaq Arif Chaudhry

School of Business at University of Central Lancashire, United Kingdom

schaudhry@uclan.ac.uk

Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the entrepreneurial motivators or drivers that transgender entrepreneurs experience prior to launching their business or getting self-employed. This study also look at the impact of social entrepreneurship on transgender entrepreneurship. The twenty-five (25) transgender entrepreneurs interviewed are included in the study, who had quit dancing, acting, begging, and commercial sex work and founded a business or got self-employed. The major findings of the grounded theory revealed seven (7) significant entrepreneurial motivators or drivers, including economic, upbringing, and social circle; social inclusion and empowerment; personal fulfillment and identity expression; community uplifting and advocacy; market opportunities and niche creation; and response to cultural and social exclusion. This article expands our understanding of social entrepreneurship and also magnifies the core forces that drive the intention of transgender individuals to start their own business venture or get self-employment. The findings of this study also suggest the effective role of policymakers, advocacy and support groups, and non-profit or non-governmental organizations, who can play an effective role in promoting entrepreneurship among this marginalized community. Finally, this study addresses the limitations of the study and future direction for potential research.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Intention, Transgender Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial Motivators or Drivers, Social Entrepreneurship

Introduction

The history has bear witness to the existence of transgender communities in the Southern Asian region for more than four millennia. Transgender people in the subcontinent were previously regarded with dignity and respect under various traditions and customs (Nawaz & Safdar, 2023); however, this is no longer the case in this part of the world. In present times, transgender people receive inadequate consideration and are viewed as entertainment (Li,

2023). Due to the discriminatory and disrespectful behavior of the society, most of them never disclose their sexual status publicly, particularly in the Indo-Pak region (Falck & Bränström, 2023). In a few cultures, transgender individuals are considered pure souls (Ashraf et al., 2023); they are also envisioned as avatars of God (Henderson, 2024). So, it is believed that they have the power to well wish and curse anyone in the society (Shuster & Westbrook, 2024). Since the beginning of their lives, the transgender community has been treated with inequality. They always struggle with basic human rights. From early schooling to locating a suitable career, these individuals encounter discrimination at every stage of their lives. Studies have shown that transgender people do not have access to fundamental services including health care, education, work, or even a spare lavatory (Smoyer et al., 2023). The banishment of society left no other choice for transgender individuals and pushed them towards begging, acting, dancing, and unethical activities like commercial sex work, etc. (Fernandez, 2024).

Conventionally, there are only two gender nomenclatures, i.e., male and female; however, the term "transgender" is used to refer to someone who does not fit into any of the aforementioned sex categories; they are labeled as third gender or gender X (Anderson, 2023). There are two primary gender orientations that are used to describe the transgender community: female sexual orientation to male sexual orientation and male sexual orientation to female sexual orientation (Anderson, 2023); various terms such as Hijra, Khusra, Khawaja Sira, Mitha, Kinner, and Murat are used to refer to them in the Indo-Pak region (Shroff, 2020). All transsexuals, transgenders, and non-conforming genders are included in this category since the World Health Organization (WHO) uses the term "transgender" as a general term to describe people whose gender identity and sexual orientation do not align with society's traditional standards of sex. In Pakistan, transgender people are now defined as anyone who is listed as gender-X in the national database and registration authority (NADRA) (Hussain, 2024). According to the Census 2023 of Pakistan, there are around 20 thousand transgender individuals' lives in this country (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics). These figures only represent the transgender population that is registered; the true number is hard to determine because reported data is not readily available.

The simplest definition of entrepreneurship is the owning and running one's own business (Bögenhold, 2020). Entrepreneurship is the process of generating, recognizing, and taking advantage of opportunities (McMullen et al., 2021). Furthermore, entrepreneurship is viewed as the significant contributor to economic progress of a country (Al-Qudah et al., 2022). The development of an individual's entrepreneurial intent, or preparedness to launch a new

business, is the most important and first step in the entrepreneurial process (Barba-Sánchez et al., 2022). Similarly, the factors that encourage people to start their own businesses or get self-employment are also very important, especially for underrepresented groups like transgender community.

In recent years, scholars have become more interested in LGBTQ+ studies particularly in South Asia (Shuster & Westbrook, 2024). These studies are focusing on transdisciplinary subjects that incorporate discourses from psychology, social sciences, life sciences, and arts (Billard et al., 2022). These research links have facilitated the analysis of the influence of gender identification in business and other related contexts (Paoloni et al., 2023). The current study examines the motivating forces which experience by transgender entrepreneurs before and during the launch of their own entrepreneurial endeavors. Despite the complexity of the phenomenon and the lack of viable literature, the grounded theory method seems to be the most effective approach for this investigation because it allows the collection of realities and the extraction of narratives for transgender entrepreneurship.

A small number of studies suggested potential factors that encourage people to work for themselves (Svotwa et al., 2022), but these studies were conducted on cisgender entrepreneurs. To the best of my knowledge, relatively few studies on transgender entrepreneurs—especially in Pakistan—are conducted in this way. This argument suggests that both scholars and practitioners should be interested in learning how governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and legislators can assist the transgender community in getting back on their feet. So that they were also treated fairly and with respect throughout their lives and to be viewed as valuable human resources rather than social liabilities. The concept of social entrepreneurship is deeply relevant to the study of the transgender population in Pakistan because it offers a path toward the welfare of this marginalized community, leading towards economic empowerment, social inclusion, and identity building. Beyond financial benefits, social entrepreneurship enables transgender individuals to challenge societal norms, advocate for social change, and create safe spaces for themselves and their communities. By supporting transgender entrepreneurs, Pakistan can foster economic growth while promoting a more inclusive society.

With their unique social, economic, and cultural characteristics, transgender entrepreneurship is highly relevant to the study in Asian context. For this purpose, there are various reasons to look into the driving forces that pushed transgender entrepreneurs to start their own business or get self-employed. First and foremost, the transgender community's

financial independence and economic empowerment are crucial because, in Asian context, underemployment and unemployment are caused by the widespread discrimination transgender people face in the formal job market; only entrepreneurship can provide an alternate source of income. Furthermore, as the majority of transgender people come from low-income families, businesses can help them achieve financial security, lessen their need for begging, prostitution, or dancing, and halt the cycle of poverty.

Secondly, society should make use of the unrealized potential of transgender entrepreneurs by integrating them into the national economy, as their contribution to the nation's economic development is extremely important. This study formalizes and amplifies the contributions of the numerous transgender people who already engage in informal economic activities. Thirdly, because some transgender entrepreneurs utilize their firms as platforms for social change to raise awareness about LGBTQ+ problems and promote inclusion, this study will aid in the advocacy and promotion of social change for transgender entrepreneurs. Visible transgender entrepreneurs can advocate for better rights and policies, enhancing the community's voice in public conversation and aiding in the influence of policy reforms. Last but not least, this study will support worldwide trends by encouraging entrepreneurship among underrepresented groups, which is consistent with global calls for diversity and inclusion in the business world. Also, pay attention to regional success stories, as similar initiatives show how entrepreneurship may support transgender communities in nearby regions like Africa and South America.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship is recognized as a major driver of technological innovation and economic growth. Entrepreneurship provides people with chances for their economic progress and has the capacity to establish, launch, and grow new businesses (Morris et al., 2020). In today's digital era, entrepreneurial activities are not limited to any specific demographic or geographic sector of the globe (Autio et al., 2021). Although it has its share of challenges, entrepreneurship still provides a route to both financial empowerment and economic development for the nations. The inventive and creative nature of an entrepreneur is an evident response to a changing environment and is a demonstration of entrepreneurship. There is continuous progress and reformation in every area of socioeconomic activities. The concept of promoting, starting, growing, modernizing, and rehabilitating businesses in the domains of trade, industry, commerce, and e-commerce is known as entrepreneurship. In addition to this, entrepreneurial ability and creativity can be fostered through small and medium enterprises

(SMEs) (Mubarik et al., 2023). Therefore, the role of SMEs is very significant for entrepreneurship (Mubarik et al., 2023).

On the other hand, an entrepreneur is a person who has the abilities and skills to direct and control the human potential for the establishment of a business (Pepple & Enuoh, 2020). Historically, entrepreneurship has been a male-dominated field, although this has changed over time in the literature of business (Ringblom & Johansson, 2020). At present times, entrepreneurship is no longer limited to any gender, color, or race (Bruton et al., 2023). Along with other minority groups, the transgender community is also becoming more and more interested in entrepreneurship (Chandra, 2022). As far as being concerned with social entrepreneurship, it is essential for financial betterment and personal growth for the transgender community to include themselves in entrepreneurship. It will support the social inclusion, gender equality, and empowerment of the transgender population. Because of the changed circumstances, transgender individuals are now more conscious. Being an entrepreneur gives transgender persons a new platform to pursue their career goals while retaining their independence and self-sufficiency. Both male and female entrepreneurs make important contributions to economic growth, but transgender entrepreneurship has emerged as a major force for economic advancement in recent years (Asghar et al., 2022). Although transgender people play an important role in society, their business potential has not been fully utilized because of their less favorable status in Southeast Asia (Compas, 2023).

The potential of social entrepreneurship to address urgent social concerns through creative and sustainable business models has drawn a lot of attention from scholars and practitioners (Gupta & Srivastava, 2024). It describes the process of creating, financing, and putting into action solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues through the use of entrepreneurial tactics. Social entrepreneurship has enormous potential in Southeast Asia, since the socioeconomic environment is broad and complex, especially for underrepresented groups like the transgender population (Anh et al., 2022). All facets of society, especially previously underrepresented groups, must have equal access to chances for growth and development in order for society to be affluent and inclusive. In this regard, social entrepreneurship may be essential to resolving the issues that the transgender community in Pakistan faces and promoting their economic and social development. In Pakistan, the transgender population has long had difficulty establishing itself in the mainstream economy and is frequently the target of social exclusion, discrimination, and economic marginalization (Akram et al., 2023). The historic decision of the Supreme Court for Pakistan at the start of the

20th century, recognizing transgender individuals as a "third gender," was a first step toward this community's legal recognition and protection of their rights. Nevertheless, transgender people still have a difficult time getting access to jobs and business, healthcare, and education despite these legal improvements (Ramos et al., 2022).

According to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), transgender people are among the most economically disadvantaged groups in Southeast Asia, with approximately 92% of them unable to engage in any kind of economic activity (Arzinos & De la Medina Soto, 2021). Practices of social entrepreneurship, which prioritize providing social value over profit, provide a novel way to solve the particular difficulties that the transgender population faces (Khalid et al., 2022). Social enterprises have effectively given marginalized populations in wealthy countries the chance to work for themselves and become financially independent. By providing transgender people with a platform for employment and business, social entrepreneurship in Pakistan might serve a similar purpose by promoting their integration into the mainstream economy. As the economy expands, entrepreneurship can help excluded communities become more integrated into the economy, which will benefit both their quality of life and the country's overall economic growth. Through the promotion of social participation, financial independence, and skill development, social entrepreneurship provides a viable strategy to solve the persistent problems of poverty, unemployment, and prejudice that transgender people confront (Qadir & Chaudhry, 2024).

But even with the potential advantages of social entrepreneurship, the transgender community in Pakistan faces major obstacles to its adoption. Social stigma, limited educational possibilities, and restricted access to financing frequently prevent transgender people from engaging in business endeavors. Financial institutions' ignorance and lack of assistance make these issues worse. A multifaceted strategy, involving policy interventions, awareness campaigns, and collaborations between social entrepreneurs and governmental or non-governmental groups, is needed to address these obstacles (Qadir & Chaudhry, 2024). There is a chance to solve social injustices and promote economic growth by implementing social entrepreneurship techniques among Pakistan's transgender population. Pakistan can build a more inclusive society where all people have the chance to contribute to and profit from the country's economic development by emphasizing the entrepreneurship that empowers underprivileged groups (Qadir & Chaudhry, 2024).

Transgender are non-binary entrepreneurs, henceforth referred to as third gender entrepreneurs (Marques, 2021). When someone does not fit within social gender norms, they

are referred to as "transgender" (Marques, 2021) . People are frequently referred to as transgender if they challenge traditional, binary gender notions and exhibit a breaking and blurring of culturally prevalent stereotypical gender norms. In addition to widespread discrimination, denial of family, fear of rejection and isolation, property risks, school dropouts, physical brutal assaults, sexual harassment, depressions, democratic deficits, social disenfranchisement, economic marginalization, security concerns, human rights violations, victims of civic and basic amenities, and health risks, transgender people face a wealth of issues based solely on their gender identity. In public settings, including train stations, bus stops, schools, businesses, shopping centers, theaters, and hospitals, society regularly makes fun of the transgender community. Since transgender people are currently disenfranchised, building relationships with the wider public is essential to empowering them in the new millennium (Billard, 2024). Scholars of today should not have to deal with "transphobic" attitudes and misconceptions about them (Ye & Van Niekerk, 2024). Through a combination of skill, hard work, perseverance, and a desire to better their community, they have shown their amazing caliber while being demoralized in all of these ways. Entrepreneurial development is heavily impacted by cultural norms. In order to accomplish missionary zeal and financial security in the upcoming years, the researcher decided to evaluate their circumstances and create a high profile of transgender entrepreneurs (Campos, 2021).

Around the world, transgender people face many obstacles in the employment (Shuster & Westbrook, 2024). A global assessment on sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination at work by the International Labor Organization found that transgender people experience the highest levels of discrimination in the workplace (Di Marco et al., 2021). Contrarily, transgender individuals have received less attention in diversity management research, and there is still a significant gap in the body of knowledge (Anderson, 2023). It is common for transgender people to endure stigma, discrimination, and exclusion at employment. Since transgender people typically choose to stay hidden in order to prevent discrimination, it is very difficult to identify the transgender community and, as a result, to provide social and entrepreneurial support. On the other hand, transgender people could be completely in the closet in one aspect of their lives. The 'disclosure disconnect,' where an otherwise out person must continuously self-strategize to avoid the risks of disclosure at their workplace, is often caused by such diverse openness about a stigmatized identity (Giannetti et al., 2023). Economic disadvantages, which are made worse by the shame associated with socially identifying as transgender, disproportionately harm transgender workers.

Transgender entrepreneurs often start their own businesses in order to escape poor employment conditions (Dutta & Patil, 2024).

An entrepreneur encounters many challenges when starting a business, such as an uncertain bureaucratic environment, unfavorable economic conditions, and perplexing rules and regulations (Cerviño et al., 2024). In every developing nation, entrepreneurs encounter the same obstacles: inadequate infrastructure, limited access to financial capital, corruption, poor economic policies, limited financial opportunities, a lack of managerial skills, and business laws that make it difficult to evaluate small businesses due to poorly designed contracts and property assets. Transgender business owners have been viewed as a vital resource for the nation (Ahmad et al., 2024). Over the years, they have been able to break through the glass barrier and carve out a niche for themselves in a culture that is dominated by men. However, there is still a sizable gender gap in the number of male and female entrepreneurs who choose to pursue entrepreneurship as a career (Ilie et al., 2021). The main challenges faced by female entrepreneurs include working capital, gender bias, lack of confidence, marketing, and mistrust, as well as a lack of family support, bankers, collateral security, ignorance, and legal formalities. For transgender persons, begging and commercial sex work are their main sources of revenue, and they will continue to do so even if they find other ways to make money (Khan et al., 2024). Because they fear discrimination and exploitation, transgender women are cautious about work opportunities. A small percentage of transgender people have chosen to work for themselves and start their own businesses in spite of the stress and abuse they experience. Yet, we know little about the motivating factors of transgender entrepreneurial intent (Lockhart et al., 2023).

The Pakistani government has taken a number of actions to improve the lives of the transgender community, such as issuing passports, national identity cards, and other identification documents for gender X (Redding, 2020). The United Nations Organization (UNO) assisted the Pakistani government in implementing various programs aimed at enhancing the lives of transgender people (Murad & Rambely, 2024). In Pakistan, a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are assisting transgender people in achieving their basic rights to employment and education. However, many transgender people are not performing well because they are seen begging at various traffic signals. Transgender people are treated this way because the government does not provide them with a great degree of social and economic support. These characteristics of transgender people and their work are not their destiny. Although there are a lot of transgender students in Pakistan these days, the

percentage is still small. Additionally, due to their low educational attainment, transgender employees do not meet the public sector job quota. Given that other communities now have access to social ideals and opportunities, prejudice against transgender people is irrational. Studies showed that one important component influencing transgender people's ability to work appropriately is education (Kelley et al., 2022).

Additionally, showed that transgender people who are enhancing their social lives must own enterprises. In the meantime, noted that transgender people have limited opportunity to grow and appropriately launch their businesses in the market. The perspective of transgender people shifts when there are few commercial opportunities available to them in the market. The business environment for transgender people in industrialized countries is, nevertheless, comparatively favorable for achieving financial independence, and they need education to access more economic prospects. Nevertheless, it was stated that transgender people are having trouble starting actual businesses in Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2024). What motivates transgender people in Pakistan to start their own businesses has not been shown by the material that is currently available. The social and economic lives of transgender people are severely disrupted in third-world nations such as India and Pakistan. The employment market in Pakistan includes a 2% quota for transgender people (Waqar et al., 2022). Organizations in Pakistan's governmental and private sectors have failed miserably to integrate transgender individuals into their various occupations. In Pakistan, transgender people have a lower degree of education than those in other professions. Even in the business field, the way society views transgender people has a negative impact on their job and personality (Thoroughgood et al., 2021).

Examining the elements that foster entrepreneurial intent is important since researchers have begun to dig into the psychological viewpoint in an effort to comprehend entrepreneurial conduct better (Su et al., 2021). The development of entrepreneurial intent is influenced by a variety of factors, including psychological, social, cultural, religious, and economic ones. Although there is a noticeable dearth of study on the factors that influence or motivate entrepreneurial drive, this has produced some important new discoveries (Shahzad et al., 2021). As a distinct and conceptually intriguing minority population, transgender entrepreneurs are the main focus of the current study. This is due to the fact that transgender entrepreneurs have the potential to both challenge and subvert prevailing gendered and heteronormative notions of entrepreneurship, as well as to uphold and reinforce them. Even in the literature on entrepreneurship, however, little is known about the conduct of

transgender entrepreneurs (Ratten, 2023). Though little is known about the factors that truly motivate transgender persons to launch their own businesses or work for themselves, it is thought that they may become entrepreneurs in order to overcome labor market disadvantages. Therefore, it's crucial to understand the elements that affect their decision to pursue entrepreneurship as a career. Additionally, they can encounter discrimination from both prospective clients and employees they hire, which could cause them to feel ashamed and afraid, which could affect their behavior and sense of self-efficacy as entrepreneurs. Compared to other minority entrepreneurship, like that of women and immigrants, the scholarly literature on transgender business is still in its infancy (Ratten, 2023). However, the majority of the research now in publication focuses on the identities and actions of transgender entrepreneurs. Depending on the larger external world surrounding them, transgender entrepreneurs actively control how their gender and entrepreneurial identities intersect and are displayed in their business operations (Essers et al., 2023). Research on the theoretical and practical contributions of social entrepreneurship is now underway in Pakistan. The goal of this study is to investigate the elements that motivate or drive entrepreneurial determination in order to add to the body of knowledge already in existence. The first step toward social entrepreneurship is the establishment of entrepreneurial intention, as was previously mentioned. Finding these key elements that influence entrepreneurial intention is equally crucial in this situation.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, taking grounded theory into account as a research approach. This research approach is appropriate since there is a dearth of literature on the factors that truly motivate transgender people to launch their own businesses, or work for themselves, especially in Southeast Asian context. It was Glaser and Strauss (1967), two American academics, who originally introduced grounded theory in literature. To build a grounded theory, a systematic procedure of gathering, combining, analyzing, and conceptualizing qualitative data for theory must be followed. Using actual facts to construct a theory is the primary objective of the grounded theory research. In contrast to the more conventional way of testing hypotheses, this approach focuses more on the creation of hypotheses through a careful examination of the data in search of recurring themes, concepts, and hypotheses. When there is a lack of information or when the notions that are now widely accepted are inadequate, grounded theory is a useful method for improving study comprehension.

Inclusion Criteria:

Purposive or snowball sampling is used to find the necessary transgender participants with the assistance and backing of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The potential participants are shortlisted based on the following inclusion criteria:

- 1- Adopt a transgender identity
- 2- Only adults (18 years of age or older)
- 3- Left commercial sex work, dancing, and begging
- 4- Working class transgender individuals only (running a self-employed firm or obtaining self-employment)
- 5- Experience is at least (1) one year.
- 6- Engage in entrepreneurship (either start their own company or work for themselves after embracing their sexual orientation and gender identity).
- 7- Consent in writing to take part in the research

Interview Protocol:

The semi-structured interview guide (questionnaire) was shared with the mediating NGOs well before time to provide prior information regarding the interview process, interview protocol, participant's inclusion criteria, all the possible questions to be asked, time, durations, etc. After the response from various NGOs, few were shortlisted due to the organizational reputation. Later, the finalization for interview dates, times, and venues, the interviews were conducted face-to-face at the nominated venue by the concerned non-governmental organizations (NGOs). After that, written consent was taken from all the participants before the start of the interview, along with the intact choice to leave the interview at any stage without any explanation or clarification. The interviews were recorded with the help of an HD video camera after the consent from all participants.

The interviews were started with the disclaimer that these interviews are used purely for academic purposes, along with the commitment that the identities of participants will be kept confidential. Interviews were conducted in the native language of the participants, as most of them felt comfortable in their mother's language. Subsequently, the detailed explanation is given on the aims and objectives of the study, and ensure the participant feels fully secure and comfortable to get the true responses. At this stage, interviews were started with open-ended questions to ensure further comfort level of the participants. The interviewer presented a souvenir to the participants to relax them and make confirmable them the information acquired during the interview is kept confidential, and the participants will

remain anonymous. Based on previous findings, the interview schedule was adjusted, and data collection was halted when saturation (redundancy) was achieved. Following each interview, field notes were generated for any other noteworthy discoveries.

The duration of in-depth interviews ranged from 90 to 100 minutes per interview, till the saturation point (homogeneous responses) 25 interviews were conducted. After the data collection, interview transcripts were created. It is pertinent to mention here that the interview schedule were keep changing in the light of previous finding of the data. The widely recognized qualitative tool NVIVO 15, which can manage massive volumes of data, was used to analyze the data.

Findings and Analysis

The finding of the study explained the following entrepreneurial motivators or drivers, which actually pushed transgender entrepreneurs towards starting their own business venture or get self-employed. At the end of the interviews, transcripts are analyzed using the open, selective, and axial coding. There are seven (7) main entrepreneurial motivators or drivers including economic, upbringing and social circle, social inclusion and empowerment, personal fulfillment and identity expression, community uplifting and advocacy, market opportunities and niche creation, and response to cultural and social exclusion, which push the transgender entrepreneur to start their own business or get self-employed:

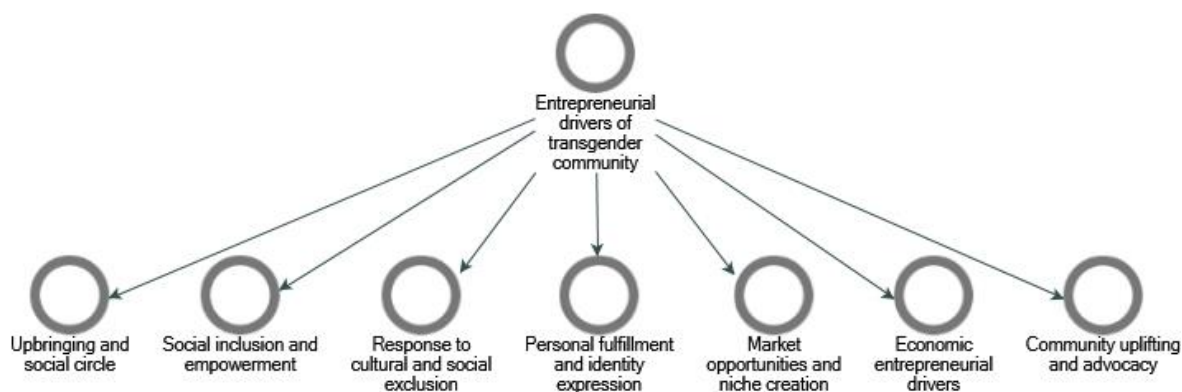


Figure 1: the entrepreneurial motivators or drivers of transgender community

1- Economic entrepreneurial drivers:

This category of the drivers includes all financial and monetary-related matters. According to the participants, one of the most significant incentives for entrepreneurship is economic drivers from entrepreneurial intent. These factors help transgender business owners to become stable and financially independent. The following three subcategories are included in this category:

- i. **Financial independence:** Entrepreneurship provides a path for financial self-sufficiency, reducing reliance on informal or exploitative jobs (e.g., begging, dancing).
- ii. **Limited employment opportunities:** Due to workplace discrimination, entrepreneurship offers an alternative for income generation and long-term economic security.
- iii. **Wealth creation and stability:** Transgender entrepreneurs are motivated by the opportunity to accumulate assets and achieve financial stability, especially for those excluded from family support networks.

The following quotes of the participants validate the economic entrepreneurial drivers along with all given dimensions:

"I am fed-up with inconsistent income, that's why I started my business." (Participant 01)

"Financial instability motivates me for business." (Participant 03)

I do not have much option as alternative career, so I decided to start my own business" (Participant 07)

"I want a respectable financial independence, because of this reason I started my own business." (Participant 14)

"I want to make money as money is the only thing which ensure respect and acceptability of society" (Participant 15)

"I want financial stability, which motivate me to start my business" (Participant 19)

Regardless of gender identification, money is the primary motivator for all business owners. This is also true for transgender entrepreneurs, who rank this as the primary motivator for their entrepreneurial aspirations.

2- Upbringing and social circle:

The individuals' entrepreneurial motivations were also impacted by their childhood, family history, peer support, and supportive surroundings. For instance, some of them were up in entrepreneurial households where their parents and siblings served as role models, which inspired them to find owning their own company exciting. On the other hand, some of them had both financial and emotional support from their parents, which helped them gain confidence and made it simpler for them to get ready for entrepreneurship.

- i. **Family support:** Transgender entrepreneurs can influence from any immediate family member like parents, siblings etc. to peruse entrepreneurship as career
- ii. **Peers support:** Transgender entrepreneurs can influence from any friend or relative to peruse entrepreneurship as career

- iii. **Enabling surrounding environment:** Transgender entrepreneurs can influence from surrounding social circle, which they idolized someone or consider as role model to pursue entrepreneurship as career.

“My friend inspired me a lot, she also helped me to starting my own business” (Participant 02)

“My family much appreciate me when they know that I want to become an entrepreneur.” (Participant 13)

“My father has the same business background, so he helped me.” (Participant 16)

“I consider Khawar Riaz as my ideal, he inspire me role model, that why I choose this profession” (Participant 18)

“My family background shape my entrepreneurial motivation by their support and courage, I am able to transform my dream into reality in the form of resultant.” (Participant 25)

The quotes presented highlight the significance of peer support, family history, and a supportive setting in fostering the entrepreneurial aspirations of transgender individuals. The quotes have clarified what others have suggested about the influence of family background, upbringing, friends' support, and the surrounding social circle on the entrepreneurial interests of these respondents. These quotes highlight the importance of men being raised in an entrepreneurial environment and the indispensable support of family in influencing transgender entrepreneurs.

3- Social inclusion and empowerment:

The third motivating factor identified by the data was "social inclusion and empowerment." Many participants saw being an entrepreneur as a means of demonstrating their value and acceptance, challenging cultural prejudices, and establishing a safe workplace or environment where transgender people can gain self-esteem and community membership.

- i. **Social acceptance:** Running a successful business can help transgender individuals gain recognition and respect within their communities.
- ii. **Challenging stereotypes:** Entrepreneurship provides an opportunity to break societal stereotypes, demonstrating their capability and professionalism.
- iii. **Creating safe workspaces:** Many transgender entrepreneurs seek to create inclusive work environments, not only for themselves but also for other marginalized groups.

“I want acceptance from society. I feel they should treat me with equality.” (Participant 05)

“As per my gender identity, I enjoy the free and fair decision-making of my business matters as I deal with male-dominated business industry.” (Participant 09)

“Being transgender entrepreneur, I have not only both genders but also have both genders power, I can see thing from both perspective male and female” (Participant 11)

“Because I know that gender is the main thing to live in society. I see all opportunities in my surrounding, but no one can accept this thing, and then I move in business site as an entrepreneur to prove that I have equal rights to do something.” (Participant 20)

The statements reflect the interviewees' unquenchable desire for social approval and the belief that entrepreneurship may meet that need.

4- Personal fulfillment and identity expression:

One of the primary reason to become entrepreneur is personal fulfilment and identity expression. Personal fulfilment is achievement of life goals which are important to an individual, in contrast to the goals of society, family and other collective obligations. On the other hand, identity expression means a multi-voice discussion, is to encourage contemplation on the idea of identity as self-perception and as a consequence of the shifting social and cultural phenomena that "frame" each person's story.

Many cited identity expression and personal fulfillment as the main factors in their decision to start their own business. Being an entrepreneur, in their opinion, is about taking charge of one's own life, having the flexibility to act and make decisions, and having the chance to significantly and permanently impact whatever professional endeavors one chooses to pursue.

- i. **Reclaiming identity:** Entrepreneurship offers a platform to express individuality and identity, empowering transgender individuals to be authentic without fear of judgment.
- ii. **Sense of achievement:** The pursuit of business goals provides a sense of accomplishment and personal growth, boosting self-esteem and confidence.
- iii. **Role models and legacy:** Many transgender entrepreneurs aspire to leave a positive legacy, becoming role models for the community and inspiring future generations.

“I decided to start my own business venture because I wanted to create something that aligned with my values and vision. I also craved the identity expression that entrepreneurship offers.” (Participant 07)

“I want to do things on my own terms and to do something for myself.” (Participant 08)

“I opted to embark on my own entrepreneurial journey because I aimed to pioneer something groundbreaking and steer my career path with autonomy.” (Participant 10)

“I want to do something for my community, so that my community consider me as their role model” (Participant 14)

I want to prove that transgender are equal to other cisgender people but can do better business management”
(Participant 21)

These quotations highlight the participants' enduring desire for autonomy and self-determination, which they felt entrepreneurship might provide.

5- Market opportunities and niche creation:

Another motivator identified in the research was the participants' enthusiasm in the industry or business they had chosen, which helped them carve out a niche for themselves and their community. A lot of participants thought that entrepreneurship was a way to meet and help people in the community. They can transform their ideas into truly cherished and appreciated products or services, meeting the requirements of the community. Additionally, it can foster creative innovation, giving the transgender community access to international markets.

- i. **Addressing community needs:** Transgender entrepreneurs often identify gaps in the market, such as LGBTQ+ fashion, wellness products, or inclusive services, and turn them into business opportunities.
- ii. **Access to global markets:** Digital platforms and social media provide opportunities to connect with international LGBTQ+ communities, expanding business reach beyond local markets.
- iii. **Creative innovation:** Entrepreneurship offers a space for creative expression, particularly in fields like fashion, art, and entertainment, which appeal to transgender entrepreneurs.

“I have a personal experience in makeup product as I myself use it a lot.” (Participant 05)

“The other people of my community helped me to stand and grow in this business” (Participant 06)

“I was encouraged by my community, I do not have any past experience of business.” (Participant 13)

“My personal goal is earning profit and expanding my business all over the world.” (Participant 14)

“Being transgender I can better understand the needs and wants of my community, therefore, I decided to serve them” (Participant 24)

The quotes highlight the importance of market opportunities and niche creation in inspiring entrepreneurial intention among transgender participants. These quotes stress the impact of addressing community needs and provision of creative innovation, which open the doors for global market to transgender entrepreneurs.

6- Community uplifting and advocacy:

The interviewees showed that a favorable impact on their local community and society at large was another significant aspect that emerged from the data. Several participants said they would use entrepreneurship as a means of making a direct or indirect difference that promotes

social change, challenges stereotypes, and uplifts other members of the transgender community.

- i. **Giving back to the community:** Some transgender entrepreneurs are motivated by a desire to uplift their community through employment, mentoring, and social initiatives.
- ii. **Social advocacy:** Entrepreneurship provides a platform for raising awareness about LGBTQ+ issues and promoting positive change.
- iii. **Creating opportunities for others:** Transgender entrepreneurs often employ other marginalized individuals, helping to address unemployment within the community.

“My personal goals in starting this business were to provide a solution to a market need, build a successful company, and make a positive impact on my community.” (Participant 09)

“As I established this organization, I had three central ambitions. In respect to the public, I desire to meet the needs. I hope to eventually build my company, into a prosperous organization. And in conclusion, in relation to the people, I strove to make a positive difference.” (Participant 10)

“I decided to launch my agriculture farming business because I wanted to aid in the push for higher levels of food production and create a reliable means for making money. Contributing to society by means of creating jobs and offering fresh vegetables was desirable to me, as was creating a business that would last” (Participant 11)

I want to expand my business as international chain, where I can hire and train only transgender, for their betterment” (Participant 19)

As evident in the quotes, a strong dedication to social entrepreneurship, participants showed responsibility and willingness to utilize entrepreneurship as a tool to bring positive change which shows a commitment to using one's entrepreneurial drive to make the world a better place for their transgender community.

7- Response to cultural and social exclusion

This is the last motivator or driver which is emerge from data, “response to cultural and social exclusion” is evident the strong drive of transgender entrepreneurs which want to prove themselves as a strong human being, they have responded the society very well. The following three dimensions are included in this motivator or driver.

- i. **Overcoming family rejection:** Entrepreneurship allows transgender individuals to become self-reliant, especially those estranged from their families.
- ii. **Survival strategy:** For many, entrepreneurship is a necessary survival strategy in the face of limited social welfare and support systems.

- iii. **Adaptation to informal economy:** Many transgender individuals leverage existing skills (e.g., performance art, tailoring) to launch small businesses, transitioning from informal to formal entrepreneurship.

“When I was do nothing for my survival, I receive shame and disrespect from society, as I get my business started, there was change of 360 degree. My parent also accepted me, this the power of entrepreneurship” (Participant 09)

“When I was able to make money with respect, my family, friends and social circle accepted me” (Participant 10)

“I started my business for my survival” (Participant 18)

“I expect from society that transgender entrepreneurs are also contribution the economic progress of this country so they deserve the same acceptance from them” (Participant 20)

As proved in the above mentioned quotes, transgender entrepreneurs responded to cultural and social exclusion very well. They are trying to serve the nation as other normal cisgender individuals.

Discussion

As already discussed, the core idea of this research is to identify the driving or motivating forces that trigger the intention of transgender individuals to pursue entrepreneurship in the form of starting their own business venture or getting self-employment. The highlight of the study is the contribution of social entrepreneurship, as very little research is conducted on transgender entrepreneurs, who encountered various factors that motivated them to pursue entrepreneurship under the notion of social entrepreneurship in the Asian context. The finding of the study suggests the seven main factors, including economic, upbringing and social circle; social inclusion and empowerment; personal fulfillment and identity expression; community uplifting and advocacy; market opportunities and niche creation; and response to cultural and social exclusion, which help in the development of entrepreneurial intent among transgender entrepreneurs, as intention is the unit of behavior and the first step towards the entrepreneurial process.

According to the study's findings, stigmatized social behavior and an unsupportive environment reasoned more challenges to the transgender entrepreneurs as compared to the cisgender entrepreneurs for making the decision to start their own venture or get self-employment. They consequently have restricted access to the available resources, which limits their capacity to generate, envision, and ultimately take advantage of entrepreneurship opportunities. Generally, the motivating factors that the transgender entrepreneurs

encountered are similar to those of cisgender entrepreneurs, but experiences of transgender are different as they are not only biologically different but also socioeconomically distinctive. The majority of the time, every entrepreneur has the same reasons for starting their own business or working for themselves, i.e., profit making, but transgender persons are different, and their motivation is not limited to money-making only.

The seven key drivers or motivators of entrepreneurial intent among transgender entrepreneurs were identified with the help of grounded theory, including economic, upbringing and social circle; social inclusion and empowerment; personal fulfillment and identity expression; community uplifting and advocacy; market opportunities and niche creation; and response to cultural and social exclusion. The first and the most significant factor which sensitized the entrepreneurial intent among transgender community is economic and financial factor. As discussed earlier, money is the primary factor for any business activity but transgender entrepreneurs consider is more than that, they consider it as tool or survival. Economic factors not only provide them financial independence but also help them in their wealth creation and stability. Another angle of the significant of economic factor is the limited employment opportunities for transgender community. Entrepreneurship provides an alternative for generating money and ensuring long-term financial stability in the face of job discrimination. By offering a route to financial independence, entrepreneurship lessens dependency on unofficial or exploitative occupations (such as dancing or begging).

The second driver which affect entrepreneurial intention of transgender entrepreneur is upbringing and social circle. It is fact that the social surrounding of the individuals, help them to develop their intention. This is the reason, if both or any one parent of a child are doing business, there is high tendency that the child will opt the same business as his career, therefore, family and peer support influenced transgender individuals to peruse entrepreneurship as career option. Another reason is the enabling surrounding environment which shaped entrepreneurial intention of transgender entrepreneurs as they may get inspiration from members of their social circle, who they look up to or who they view as role models for pursuing entrepreneurship as a vocation. According to the finding, social inclusion and empowerment is the third driving force of entrepreneurial intent among transgender community. Whereas social acceptance is crucial since transgender people can obtain respect and recognition in their communities by operating a respectable business. Entrepreneurship offers the chance to dispel social norms by showcasing one's competence and expertise. Many transgender entrepreneurs aim to provide inclusive workplaces for underrepresented groups.

The fourth driver is the personal fulfillment and identity expression, being an entrepreneur gives transgender people a platform to express their uniqueness and identity, enabling them to be true to themselves without worrying about criticism. It helps in reaching professional objectives, fosters personal development and a sense of accomplishment, which raises confidence and self-worth. A lot of transgender entrepreneurs hope to make a good impression on the community and motivate the next generation of the transgender community.

The fifth motivator or driver of entrepreneurial intent in the transgender community is market opportunities and niche creation. It is pertinent to mention here that people feel comfortable within their communities; the same is applicable to transgender individuals. This fundamental principle creates a lot of opportunities for transgender entrepreneurs and creates a niche in the market. Therefore, transgender entrepreneurs are trying to address community needs by providing wellness products, LGBTQ+ fashion products, or inclusive services to the transgender community. This gives access to transgender entrepreneurs to worldwide marketplaces using different digital platforms. The sixth is the community uplifting and advocacy, as entrepreneurship has been instrumental in advancing social change, dispelling misconceptions, and improving the quality of life for the transgender population. Entrepreneurship offers a forum for bringing attention to transgender issues and encouraging constructive change. With new job creation, mentoring, and social projects, some transgender entrepreneurs are driven by a desire to improve their community. The last driver that stimulates entrepreneurial intention among the transgender community is the response to cultural and social exclusion. Entrepreneurship is not only helping the transgender community for a better standard of life but also helping them to create a response to cultural and social exclusion, which includes overcoming family rejection, survival strategy, and adaptation to the informal economy. Transgender people, especially those who are separated from their family, can become self-sufficient through entrepreneurship. Many people view entrepreneurship as a vital survival tactic in the face of inadequate social welfare and support networks. Many transgender people go from informal to formal entrepreneurship by starting small firms using their preexisting skills (such as performance art or tailoring).

Conclusion

Transgender people can successfully overcome major challenges including gender inequality, prejudice, and enduring stereotypes by engaging in social entrepreneurship. Investigating the entrepreneurial elements that influenced transgender individuals to work for themselves or start their own enterprises was the goal of this study. The findings of the study revealed that

transgender entrepreneurs encountered seven entrepreneurial drives which stimulated their entrepreneurial intention consisting on financial or economic, upbringing, and social circle; social inclusion and empowerment; personal fulfillment and identity expression; community uplifting and advocacy; market opportunities and niche creation; and response to cultural and social exclusion.

These seven drivers are the basic reason which trigger the entrepreneurial intent among the transgender community as some of motivators were caused by the social environment, where transgender individuals born and raised, while others were caused by their personality or psychological reasons. These seven driver are very significant as these can help not only the transgender entrepreneurs but the government, legislators, civic society, and non-governmental organizations work to support this underprivileged community live their lives with dignity and respect. This study has also contributed towards the importance of social entrepreneurship as social entrepreneurship is the umbrella term for transgender entrepreneurship. Therefore, social entrepreneurs have the significant impact on the society and contribute directly to the values system of society and indirectly to the economics of a state.

The social welfare and all-gender inclusive approach are crucial in promoting entrepreneurial activities, according to the societal aspect of social entrepreneurship. Without comprehensive legislation, active implementation, and the establishment of institutions that consistently protect the rights of minorities, including the underprivileged community like transgender entrepreneurs, very little progress is anticipated from entrepreneurship. Additionally, there will be a detrimental impact on entrepreneurial activity if these laws and regulations are unclear or poorly implemented. Enhancing this disenfranchised community's education and skill set is another important factor. One sociocultural component that has been mentioned is education investment. Being well-educated and proficient transgender people, they are drawn to new ideas and can effectively utilize the many equipment and tools required to conduct their business endeavors, which aids them in spotting potential market opportunities. In this instance, transgender people's education and skill development should be taken into account.

Economic considerations make up the second facet of social entrepreneurship. By adjusting its policies, such as enhancing income distribution and providing tax benefits to the underprivileged community, including transgender people, the government can encourage entrepreneurship. The significance of fare income distribution is found in the fact that it

creates a suitable social environment that supports economic activity, which presupposes an extra incentive to promote entrepreneurship. Government initiatives that support employment policy can also indirectly encourage entrepreneurship. Because a decrease in unemployment stimulates market demand, more already-produced commodities are sought after, opening the door for the introduction of new products. In addition to offering new opportunities and market niches (transgender entrepreneurship) that would encourage the emergence of new entrepreneurs, this also offers the potential to increase the output of development-related activities. Therefore, it is anticipated that employment and both general and social entrepreneurship will have a favorable link. Tax reductions for all minority groups are one of the other economic considerations. These two factors, as previously said, enable businesses to be more competitive and, more importantly, to encourage other entrepreneurs to incorporate these innovations into their own production processes. Considering all these theoretical aspects, the model of social entrepreneurship strongly emphasizes transgender entrepreneurship, and the drivers or motivators that trigger the entrepreneurial intent of transgender individuals are also relevant.

Limitation and Future Direction

Like other research projects, this research has several shortcomings that should be fixed in further investigations. The study had a limited number of participants, i.e., 25 transgender entrepreneurs, which can affect the generalizability and statistical robustness of the findings. The study also creates the urban bias, as most of the participants were from urban areas; the findings may not reflect the experiences of transgender people in rural settings, where access to resources and societal attitudes can differ significantly. The reliance of the study is on the self-reported data from participants, which could introduce biases, such as social desirability bias, recall bias, or underreporting of sensitive issues. In addition to this, the study was cross-sectional in nature; it may not capture the dynamic, longitudinal changes in the lives of transgender individuals or the evolving societal attitudes toward them. The study might have emphasized challenges faced by the transgender community without fully exploring their resilience, coping mechanisms, or positive aspects of their experiences. This research is focused on the exclusion of intersectionality; therefore, the study may not have examined how overlapping identities (e.g., religion, ethnicity, disability) intersect with gender identity to influence the experiences of transgender people.

While considering the future directions of the research, conduct longitudinal research to track changes over time in the lives of transgender individuals, such as the impact of evolving

policies, social acceptance, and access to education or healthcare. The future studies can extend the research to compare the experiences of transgender individuals across different socioeconomic groups, urban and rural settings, or varying levels of education. The future studies can also focus on the intersectional aspect and explore how intersecting identities, such as caste, religion, or ethnicity, affect the lives of transgender individuals in Pakistan and beyond. The future studies can do the policy-oriented research and examine the effectiveness of existing policies aimed at supporting transgender individuals and identify gaps that need to be addressed by policymakers. The future research consider inclusion of other minority groups and broaden the scope within the LGBTQ+ spectrum, investigating their unique challenges and experiences. The study can compare the experiences of transgender individuals in Pakistan with those in neighboring or culturally similar countries to identify shared challenges and culturally specific issues. Lastly, the future study can also consider the role of digital platforms and social media in shaping the lives, activism, and community-building efforts of transgender people. These limitations and directions can help enhance the scope, depth, and impact of future studies in this area.

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