

**Equity and Equality of Inclusive Education for Third Gender  
in Pakistan: A Case study of Klinefelter Syndrome (gender  
disorder)**

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Abstract

Human Rights Commission (2007) declares Article 2 that every individual has equal rights to education and access to human rights without distinction of race, color, sex, language, religion, political, national or social origin, property birth, or another status. Klinefelter syndrome (gender disorder), also known as Transgender (commonly named third gender or Khusra in Pakistan), is not considered human beings in our society. Recently a school has been opened by an NGO in Lahore city for the Transgender community, which is a brave step. This paper aimed to discuss equity and equality for inclusion in education for individuals with Klinefelter syndrome in Pakistan. A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study, and three private sector schools were selected from Lahore city using a purposive sampling technique. An in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted with school administrators, policymakers, and teachers to obtain data on the subject. The results of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis.

**Keywords:** equity, equality, inclusion, klinefelter syndrome, third gender

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## **Introduction**

Klinefelter Syndrome (KS), commonly known as Transgender, is a genetic disorder that occurs in men with an extra X chromosome (Garolla & Corona, 1984). This condition affects the physical, language, and social development of persons with KS (Plus, 2018). As a society, Pakistan has failed the community by excluding them from equal rights to education and social acceptance. The opening of a Transgender School in Lahore is considered the milestone that Pakistan has achieved to include the KS persons in the educational setup (Khan L. A., 2017). Establishing a separate school for Transgender reflects our society's orthodox mindset and another step towards discrimination (Saddique, Gang, Mirbehar, & Batool, 2017). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where inclusion in education is one of the primary goals of the Pakistan Education Policy, SDGs, and UNCRPD, separate schools for KS (Transgender) are a question mark. The point is not just to educate the community but also to give them social acceptance and equal rights. The possibility of acceptance in society and obtain white-collar jobs still prevails when these individuals pass out from the segregated schools. This is mainly because by studying in separate schools, these children will never interact with other children; thus, there will always be an invisible wall.

The mindset in society is changing after the establishment of the Transgender School as it is being recognized by the community that they have the right to get an education (WHO, 2019). However, it is a failure on the government and policymakers in Pakistan because the private sector established the school. The government has not yet taken any initiative towards this concern (Tabassum & Jamil, 2014). The sleeping policies in the documents will not make any difference for the KS persons. Nevertheless, educating this segment of the society country can develop the individuals as beneficial and responsible citizens who contribute to the community both socially and economically.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The aims and objectives of this study were to:

- Identify the gap in policy implementation for the inclusion of education in the case of Klinefelter syndrome.
- Highlight that separate schools for KS (Transgender) are leading towards further discrimination in society.
- Create awareness among the society members to establish equality and equity in education for individuals with Klinefelter syndrome.

## **The significance of the study**

This present study will contribute to manifolds' society; it will highlight the importance of KS inclusion in regular schools.

- This study will create awareness among parents, teachers, policymakers, school administrators, and society members about the importance of KS inclusion in regular schools.
- The study will throw light and envision a society that building separate schools for KS (transgender) will further strengthen the country's roots of discrimination.
- This study will encourage other researchers and scholars to ponder on the subject and contribute to this field.

## **Literature Review**

Klinefelter's Syndrome (KS) is one of the most common genetic conditions in 1 out of 650 men (Bourke, Snow, Herlihy, Amor, & Metcalfe, 2014). KS is caused by the chromosomal disorder in males and exhibits an additional sex chromosome with the Karyotype 47, XXY (Nieschlag, 2013; OTF, 2019).

Studies indicate that 75% of persons with KS remain undiagnosed throughout their lives (Herlihy, Gillam, Halliday, & McLachlan, 2011; Samango-Sprouse, Lasutschinkow, Powell, Sadeghin, & Gropman, 2019). This condition affects physical and non-physical features of these individuals that include small testes,

infertility, tall and overall body structure (Boada, Janusz, Hutaff-Lee, & Tartaglia, 2009; Support, 2018), language and learning problems, behavioral and psychosocial challenges (Leggett, Jacobs, Nation, Scerif, & Bishop, 2010).

The idea of inclusive education promotes that such an environment must be created where all children get the equal opportunity to grow and learn together rather than establishing segregated schools for children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2005). The concept of inclusion is not just limited to children with special needs. Still, it applies to children, regardless of their gender, religion, ethnicity, personality characteristics, or economic status of the families (Policy, 2017). Pakistan has signed the international treaty of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) that bounds the government to ensure the provision of education to all children with special needs and to develop an inclusive environment where all the children have access to equitable quality education and equal learning opportunities throughout their lives (UNCRPD, 2006).

Pakistan is facing multiple challenges to achieve Sustainable development goals 4 (SDG 4) that emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education. More than 22.6 million children aged between 5-16 years are out of school, and the adult literacy rate in Pakistan is at 57% (UNESCO, 2017). There are rigorous inequities to access quality education with significant discrepancies based on gender, socioeconomic status and location of children, inadequate training and qualification of teachers, low school environment and discrimination in uniform education for all, and budgetary constraints in the education sector (Sheikh, 2018). The SDG 4 aims to achieve inclusion and equitable education for all by 2030, which seems impossible to complete due to poor governance and policy implementation in Pakistan (UNESCO, 2017).

## Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was adopted to explore equity and equality for the inclusion of education in Klinefelter Syndrome. Three traditional schools from Lahore city were selected based on a purposive sampling technique. The in-depth interview was conducted from school administrators, policymakers, teachers, and principals to get the study's findings. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was prepared based on the literature review. It included themes such as the education policy of Pakistan, equal rights to education for Transgender, millennium development goals, implementation of UNCRPD commitments, and the inclusion of Transgender in regular schools. A phenomenological approach was applied to develop a thematic analysis of the interviews. A one to one in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted in a formal setting after taking an appointment from the school authorities. The participants were briefed about the term Klinefelter syndrome and its condition that occurs in individuals with KS. Interviews were recorded using an android phone, transcribed, and presented in the descriptive form. A thematic analysis was conducted based on the findings of the study.

## Results

### Demographic Information for Research Participants

**Research Participant 1:** She was a principal in Lahore's private regular school with more than ten years of experience. She was an M. Phil degree holder from a well reputed educational institute of Pakistan.

**Research Participants 2:** The second participant was a female who had eight years of work experience and was presently working as a section head in a regular private school. She was a master's degree holder.

**Research Participants 3:** She was a teacher at a regular private school in Lahore with three years of work experience. She was also well educated with M.Phil. Degree.

**Q.1 In your opinion, is it possible for persons with KS to learn?**

Participant 1 was somewhat convinced that persons with KS could learn and they can be educated.

Participants 2 had a strong opinion that persons with KS possess the mental capabilities and learn.

Participants 3 believed that persons with KS have some psychological differences from normal children but still can learn.

**Q. 2 Do persons with KS have equal rights to education?**

Participant 1 stated persons with KS are created by God, and they are also human beings; thus, they have every right to be treated and accepted equally in society. Their physical condition is not their fault.

Participant 2 held the opinion that persons with Klinefelter Syndrome have equal rights to education

Participant 3 also believed that persons with KS are equal members of society, and they have equal rights to education and other basic needs and facilities.

**Q.3 Persons with KS should be included in regular schools? Please share your opinion.**

Participant 1 believed that society is unwilling to accept persons with KS as their fellow beings and equal community members and cannot be a part of regular schools. She felt that their self-esteem might get hurt because of the negative attitude held to be people. Therefore, their early education should be in separate schools.

Participant 2 believed that schooling for KS persons is essential and a separate private school in Lahore was a good initiative. However, they must be sent to regular schools and must not be treated separately to get the chance to mix up with other children since their early childhood. This will enhance the circumstances of their acceptance in society.

Participant 3 believed that persons with KS must not be included in regular schools as society does not accept them and have a particular attitude. That is why other children will not take in their schools.

**Q.4 Do you think schools must adapt curriculum and classroom settings to accommodate KS children.**

Participant 1 replied that the schools couldn't adapt the curriculum for children with disabilities or those who have learning problems because their curriculum is designed to address the average students with an almost similar understanding and IQ levels.

Participant 2 replied that in the case of Transgender, there are no such requirements to make significant changes or adaptation in the curriculum; however, schools must fully accommodate and support them.

Participant 3 replied that it is impossible to adapt to the curriculum, especially for persons with KS.

**Q.5 Do you think teachers must be trained to handle children with KS and help them overcome social adjustment problems.**

Participant 1 replied that teachers should be trained to handle children with any disability. However, children with any physical and mental disability cannot be educated in a regular setting because their requirements are different

Participant 2 replied that there is no need as such to train teachers to handle children with KS, but teachers need to change their attitude and mindset towards them

Participant 3 replied that schools must have counselors and psychologists to handle the psychological and social adjustment issues of children with KS.

**Q.6 Would you welcome parents to bring their children with KS to your school.**

Participant 1 believes that children with KS cannot be immediately given admission in regular schools, and their gender must not be

disclosed. They can get access from nursery class, but it isn't easy to keep them in traditional schools when they reach adulthood.

Participant 2 answered that if school policies permit her, then she would give admission to children with KS.

Participant 3 replied that she would accommodate a child with KS only for the nursery section. Still, she would not give children to primary or senior units because their disability and dissimilarity are prominent later.

**Q.7 Do you have information on the legal aspects of inclusion for students with disabilities.**

Participant 1 believed that Pakistan had given some rights to persons with KS in recent times, but they are the most neglected persons in our society. She is not aware of the constitutional and legal aspects of inclusion for students with disabilities.

Participant 2 does not have any idea about the legal aspects and Pakistan's constitution on the inclusion of education, and she has not seen the practice and implementation anywhere in Pakistan.

Participant 3 replied that she is not interested in knowing or learning about KS, so she does not have any idea. However, firmly believing that the government is not contributing to creating an educational platform for them.

**Q.8 Do you know the Millennium development goals and sustainable development goals in the education sector of Pakistan?**

Participant 1 replied that she is not aware of these goals, and when explained to her, she said that it is not possible to meet the goals in Pakistan's current situation.

Participant 2 replied that she is not aware of the MDGs and SDGs in Pakistan's education sector. She would be happy if Pakistan achieves these goals. Still, there is hardly a possibility that Pakistan reaches 50% of these goals.

Participant 3 replied that she does not have any idea about Pakistan's policies and commitments but believes these policies are only written in the documents. Still, the government is not taking any practical steps to educate persons with KS, so it is impossible to achieve any such goals.

**Q.9 Do you think it is better to develop separate schools for persons with Klinefelter syndrome (Transgender) in Pakistan.**

Participant 1 replied that their own families do not accept these persons, then how it is possible to get received from society and get admission in regular schools. It is better to keep them in separate schools.

Participant 2 replied that it's an excellent initiative to give KS persons, but it is better to put them in regular schools.

Participant 3 replied that discrimination prevails in our society at every level, so this is not debatable for equality and discrimination. The point is that they should be educated and if it is becoming practical through the separate schools, then it's okay. It's better to put them in different schools because they cannot fit in the regular schools.

**Q.10 In your opinion, the exclusion of Klinefelter syndrome from education and regular schools is against Pakistan's education policy.**

Participant 1 believed that proper planning and implementation of education policy would include these children in regular schools. Otherwise, at least they can access education in separate schools.

Participant 2 replied that she is not aware of the education policy in Pakistan

Participant 3 replied that she does not know anything about Pakistan's Education policy for the inclusion of education. She said the persons with KS have different physical and mental needs, so it is fair to make separate schools where policies and planning are exclusively designed for their needs.

## Findings

The researchers, upon an in-depth interview, found the following challenges in equity and equality for the inclusion of education in the case of children with Klinefelter syndrome. Based on thematic analysis, the following themes have emerged as Challenges:

- **Equal rights to education.** All the study participants believed that children with KS have equal rights to education and have the ability to learn. Society or any other reason must not come in their way to access education.
- **Social adjustment problems.** Many participants believed that KS persons have social adjustment problems and cannot learn in an environment where they are not comfortable.
- **Psychological issues.** Some of the participants answered in the interview that individuals with KS have psychological issues. Hence, it is essential in the first place to address this problem, and then, later on, their education should be discussed.
- **Mindset.** All three participants believed that our society's mindset, including the parents, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers, is unwilling to accept KS individuals as a part of our culture and treat them as a separate community.
- **The attitude of parents and society.** It is a general belief about individuals with KS that God creates them to be like this. It's okay for them to become beggars or street dancers because they don't have any other capabilities to adjust to society. For this reason, both their families and community abandon them.
- **Acceptance in regular schools.** Many of the interview participants were unwilling to accept the children with KS at regular schools because they believe they have different physical and mental needs, so they must be sent to separate schools.
- **Awareness about inclusive education policies.** The interview participant revealed that our teachers, school administrators, and policymakers are not aware of the National Education

Policy and are completely ignorant of the MDGs and sustainable development goals in the education sector of Pakistan.

## **Discussion**

This research was initiated as the pilot project to examine the education level of children with KS (Transgender) and the international commitments of Pakistan with UNCRPD. After meeting with the school principals and teachers, the researchers evaluated that Pakistan is nowhere close to achieving its millennium development goals and SDGs. The concept of inclusive education is not new in Pakistan, and it has been under discussion for several years. Pakistan has made commitments at various international forums, but it has not achieved the level of quality standards in education. Several children in our country are deprived of education even though the provision of education to every child is the government's responsibility. Individuals with gender disorder (KS) or Transgender is one of the most vulnerable sects of society that needs the birth government and society's attention. Providing to this community is not the solution to this issue, a taboo for ages. Accepting these children in regular schools will not only open doors to new avenues for them, but it will also give them acceptance in society as productive and participative individuals.

After conducting interviews with the school principals and teachers, it was found that schools have no policies to include these children in regular school systems. However, they believe that they must get an education. However, these children cannot be included in traditional schools because they think it is challenging to change the public's mindset and create awareness among society members. The idea of Transgender or people who have (KS) gender disorder is so awkward in the eastern societies is that people do not like to sit with them, and they don't permit their children to play or eat with them. That is mainly because of the

stigma attached to their identity and not accepting them as creating nature. This mindset of the communities needs to be changed. It is only possible through education and awareness programs for all society stakeholders such as parents, family members, relatives, schoolteachers, principals, and policymakers.

The study's findings revealed that generally, schools do not have any formal policy for giving admission to the special children of the society, particularly the children with gender disorder. Teachers and school administration are not aware of the United Nation's SDG4 goals for quality inclusive education for all. That reflects the level of ignorance and negligence on the part of policymakers and school administrations and the regulatory bodies required to monitor the policy implementation and evaluation of the outcomes closely.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the interview findings and responses, it has been concluded that Pakistan is nowhere on the path of achieving equity and equality for the inclusion of education. In the 21st century, Pakistan still faces acceptance and attitude problems towards the education of individuals with KS (Transgender). School administrators and teachers believe that they have the right to education. Still, they must be sent to separate schools, which violates the National Education Policy and international commitments of the UNCRPD. It is alarming to note that where on the one hand, the policies in Pakistan talk about equity and equality of education.

On the other hand, our teachers, policymakers, and school administrators are unaware of inclusive education policies. This situation denotes the country's poor policy implementation and weak stance regarding inclusive education and providing equal opportunity for every child to get an education. To bring equity and equality in the education sector of Pakistan, it is essential that government must ensure the implementation of policies and the regulatory bodies involved in the education system must ensure

that proper training is provided to the teachers and awareness is created about the UN's sustainable development goals to achieve success in equity and equality of education in Pakistan.

Any country's success and growth strongly depend on its skilled and learned youth; every child of Pakistan must have access to quality education regardless of disability, disorder, caste, or religion. It is the concerned authorities' responsibility to effectively communicate Pakistan's plan for improving the level of education in the country and the achievement of SDG4 goals of the UN. The gap policy implementation indicates severe lapses in our education policy, planning, and performance. If this situation continued to exist, Pakistan would not achieve its goals in the education sector and face failure in policy implementation.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this qualitative study, the following recommendations have been made to bring equity and equality for the inclusion of education in children with KS.

- Through media, the government of Pakistan must start a massive awareness campaign through broadcast media so that parents and persons with KS become aware of their rights to education.
- Support must be given to the parents of children with KS from schools and the government to encourage them to accept their children and get admission in the schools.
- The Education Policy of Pakistan must be included as a quarterly staff meeting in every school in Pakistan.
- Teachers and school-administered must be trained about the inclusion of education for children with KS to accommodate these children in regular schools.

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