

Relationship between Perceived Discrimination and Depression: Moderating Role of Belief in Just World among Transgender in Punjab

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The present study was conducted to investigate the relationship of perceived discrimination and depression, and the moderating role of belief in just world among transgender (hijras) of Pakistan. Cross sectional research design was used. Data was collected from 21 cities of Punjab between November 2013 to April 2014. To achieve the objectives of this study, the sample comprised of 153 transgender persons (Gurus = 21, Chelas = 132). To measure Depression, perceived discrimination and belief in just world, self report inventories namely DASS, Day to Day Life Perceived Discrimination Measure, The Personal BJW Scale and General BJW were used. The results of Moderation Regression Analysis showed that personal belief in a just world moderates the relationship between perceived discrimination and depression such that the relationship is stronger when the personal BJW is low and weaker when personal BJW is high. During intervention, the transgender can be helped to solve their problems by reducing depression due to discrimination.

Keywords: Transgender, Perceived Discrimination, Depression, BJW.

Discrimination refers to different components of group opposition when studying inter-group relations (McKenzie, 2003), that is, studying attitudes and behaviors exhibited by members of one group towards members of another group (Taylor, Peplau, & Sears, 2000). Discrimination in the present context is defined as the behavioral component of group opposition when studying inter-group relations, focusing on perceptions by minority group members who believe they are receiving discriminatory treatment from members of the majority group (Lee, Noh, Yoo, & Sim-Doh, 2007). In the present article, relationship of perceived discrimination with depression was studied among transgender persons. Depression is viewed as sensitivity towards dysphoria, worthlessness, self-criticism, devaluation of life, apathy, anhedonia and lack of attention (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). American Psychiatric Association (2001) describes the symptoms that can be consistently observed in depression including feelings of worthlessness, fatigue, diminished ability to think or focus feelings of hopelessness and loss of energy. Depression may be caused by traumatic experiences among the transgender, as they

encounter a wide variety of discriminatory behavior in their daily life.

When an individual experiences discrimination it leads to depression. However, belief in the just world may play moderating role to minimize their effect. Belief in just world (BJW) is defined as a belief where human beings have to think that they live in a world where people generally deserve what they get and get what they deserve (Lerner & Miller, 1978). All societies demonstrate inequalities and injustices, the disproportionate distribution of wealth, and inequality of access to health care and education. Individuals respond differently to observed or experienced injustice and some individuals adopt belief systems that serve to justify existing social, economic and political arrangements (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). People have prejudiced observation of fairness for self, world and other world (Lerner, 1980). Dalbert (1999) argued that a difference should be made between the BJW for one's own self (Personal BJW) and the General BJW. The BJW for self is related with whether an individual believes that on an average events of his/her personal life are fair; while General BJW reveals

the belief that on the whole this world is a fair place (Dzuka & Dalbert, 2002).

Research by Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton (2000) revealed that discrimination is linked with depression. Researchers reported that there is significant relationship of discrimination with depressive symptoms (Han & Lee, 2011; Lee & Ahn, 2011; Taylor & Turner, 2002). A study by Wei, Heppner, Ku, & Liao (2010) also indicated that there was a positive relationship of discrimination's stress and depressive symptoms. Studies have focused on negative outcomes of perceived discrimination as depression (Huebner & Davis, 2007). Cross sectional and longitudinal studies revealed that exposure of discrimination is positively linked with impaired mental health outcomes like depressive symptoms (Burgos & Rivera 2009; Rivera, Lopez, Guarnaccia, Rafael, Glorisa, & Hector, 2011; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Some studies describe psychological impact of discriminatory behavior on depression (Sellers & Shelton, 2003); results indicated that discrimination predicted increased depression (Cassidy, O'Connor, Howe, & Warden, 2004). Another research revealed that perceived discrimination has been identified as one of the potential social risk factors of physical and mental health (Chakraborty & McKenzie, 2002).

Perception of discrimination is found to be more strongly linked with psychiatric symptoms of depression among minorities (Landrine, Klonoff, Corral, Fernandez, & Roesch, 2006; Plant & Sachs-Ericsson, 2004). Perception of discrimination among minorities has been associated with symptoms of depression (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999). Another study found significant positive relationship between perception of discrimination that transgender people experience in their life and mental health problem depression (William, & Freeman, 2007). Stressful life events and discrimination experienced by transgender people most likely leads to higher risk of mental health problems like depression (Barrientos, Silva, Catalan, Gomez, & Longueira, 2010). Especially minorities like transgender individuals experience excess discrimination that cause risk factor of depression (Factor & Rothblum,

2007). Ard and Makadon (2011) observed that perception of discrimination among transgender people is due to stress factors and has strong link with depression. Research showed that the transgender individuals who perceived discrimination often experienced depressive symptoms (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007). Meyer (2003) found that stress due to discrimination operating via anti-gay structural and societal factors, explained higher rates of mental illness of depression among transgender people. Perception of discrimination linked with high level of depression (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Clark, Coleman, and Novak (2004) suggest that internalizing problems are highly correlated with discrimination in their life depression.

It was predicted that personal BJW moderates the relation of injustice/discriminatory behavior and mental health problems as stronger when personal BJW is low and weaker than when personal BWJ is high. All researchers described that the main value of BJW is in maintaining the level of quality of mental fitness despite societal factors of injustices. From the avoidance point of view, BJW have negative relationship with factors that reduced the level of mental health and therefore, BJW reduced the severity of problems (Ritter, Benson, & Snyder, 1990). Otto, Boos, Dalbert, Schops, & Hoyer (2006) found that personal BJW is negatively related with depression and minimize their level. Dalbert (2001) explained that BJW supports the adjustment and handling methods to reduced stress and enhancing mental health. To study this phenomenon Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler (1996) found that Personal BJW has significant effect on depression and stress and it decreases their level that are caused by injustices and discrimination in society.

The discrimination literature cites three commonly used approaches that attempt to explain its psychological impact on target populations. Among these, the transactional model points out that the effect of perception of discrimination on mental fitness may be minimized or enhanced by possible moderating influences of personal factors (Cassidy et al, 2004; Noh & Kaspar, 2003). According to Dalbert

(1998), BJW works as a cognitive style of coping. Another study conducted by Lupfer, Doan, and Houston (1998) described that individuals having strong Personal BJW are less distressed and level of feeling of distress minimize by Personal BJW when they encountered stress producing situations as compared with having high level of general BJW. Dalbert (2006) suggested that when someone experiences stress for a long time, which produces a certain situation and the person may have doubts, his/her personal belief in a just world serves as a coping strategy and lessens the effect of harm.

Transgender people face discrimination at every turn. Perceived discrimination has been identified as a significant life stressor, but there has not been sufficient research done in Pakistani population. Such research is likely to have large impact on a quickly growing minority group. The purpose of the present investigation was to study perceived discrimination that predicts depression in transgender. Further, this study intended to explore moderating role of belief in just world among the transgender. Based on the previous studies and researches, following hypotheses are formulated: (1) Perceived discrimination would be positively associated with depression among transgender; (2) Personal belief in just world would play moderating role between perceived discrimination and depression among transgender.

Method

Participants:

The sample of the study was N = 153 individuals, Gurus 13.7 % (n = 21) and Chelas 86.3% (n = 132), age ranging from 16-81 years (M = 36.84, SD = 15.71) and including those who are by birth transgender (hijras). The sample was comprised of transgender individuals collected from 21 different cities of Punjab. The participants were approached for data collection in their communities through snowball sampling. Those who were transgender by adoptive profession, transgender by choice, with gender identity disorder, or living with their families were excluded.

Instruments:

The Day to Day Life Perceived Discrimination Measure developed by Williams, Yu, Jackson, and Anderson (1997) was used to measure perception of discrimination of participants that takes place in daily life. The Day to Day Life Perceived Discrimination Measure Scale eliminates the option of socially desirable responses of measures. The original measure included nine items. Response format of scale was a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never), 2 (once a year), 3 (many times a year), 4 (many times a month), 5 (once a week) and 6 (daily). Reliability ($\alpha = .91$) scores indicate this scale is internally consistent. High score reflects high discrimination and low score indicates low discrimination experienced by the sample. Score range is from 0 to 54.

For the purpose of the study, the items of Day to Day Life Perceived Discrimination Measure were translated into Urdu by using standard back translation method. Urdu translation of the scales was done by 3 bilingual experts who had command on Urdu and English languages and also knew psychological terminologies. The experts were asked not to go for word to word translation, but the comprehensive translation that should convey the same connotation as in original items. Once the translation was done into Urdu, the committee approach method was used to select the best Urdu translated items. Committee selected the best items of Urdu translation from different translated versions. Once the scale was completed in Urdu; it was then submitted for translation in English. Three bilingual experts (other than those who translated the scale in Urdu) who have command on the two languages and also have the understanding of psychological terminologies again translated these Urdu items back to English. And the items of translation that closely related with the original item were selected for study purpose after going through a tryout.

Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scales (DASS). To measure Depression, the self report inventory DASS (by Lovibond, & Lovibond, 1995) was used. The short version of the DASS with 21 items, translated in Urdu by Aslam (2005), was

used. Subscales are Depression, Anxiety, and Stress. Subscale depression has (item no 3, 5, 10, 13, 16, 17 and 21). Response format was 4 point Likert type scale from 0 (did not apply to me at all) to 3 (applied to me very much, or most of the time). Objective of this scale was to assess the negative emotions associated with depression. It is not intended as a diagnostic scale on its own. This measure used to assess the severity of depression. Internal consistency of this scale was (alphas) of 0.81-0.91 as reported by original author and test-retest reliabilities of is 0.71-0.81.

Belief in Just World Scale. The personal BJW was assessed through The Personal BJW Scale (by Dalbert, 1999) translated by Fatima and Khalid (in 2007). Internal reliability, reported by original author $\alpha = .82-.87$ (Dalbert, 1999) and reliability of Urdu version of Personal BJW was reported to be .93 and the scale has discriminating validity (Fatima & Khalid, 2007). The General BJW was assessed through General belief in just world Scale developed by Maes (1998) and translated by Fatima and Suhail (2010) reported its reliability as .75-.70. There are seven items in the Personal BJW scale and nine items in General BJW scale. Each item is to be rated on a 4-point Likert-type rating scale, giving the score of 4 to 'strongly agree', 3 to 'agree', 2 'to disagree', and 1 to 'strongly disagree'. Scale scores are obtained by summing the scores across the items for each individual (Dalbert, 1999).

Procedure:

Before administering the instruments a special permission letter was signed by the Chairperson, Psychology Department, University of Sargodha. First of all we consulted the head office of transgender individuals at Rawalpindi with the help of in-charge correspondence express media group of Islamabad. The purpose and advantages were clearly communicated to the heads of specified communities. Participants who have reading difficulty or could not read that questionnaire were interviewed and after the interview, questionnaires were marked according to their responses. After the administration of questionnaire, individuals were paid money if

they wished. Data collection was completed in 6 months. Following ethical considerations, the participants were debriefed about the objectives and reason of the study, the participants were assured of their confidentiality of their personal information and a written consent was obtained from all the participants individually.

Results

The purpose of the present study was to study the relationship between perceived discrimination and depression, and studying the moderating role of belief in just world among transgender individuals. After the completion of data collection, different statistical methods were used to analyze this data. Descriptive, correlation and linear regression tests were used for statistical analysis.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between perceived discrimination, Just World Beliefs and depression among transgender (N = 153).

Variables	1	2	3	4
Perceived discrimination	–	.36***	-.23***	.24***
Depression		–	-.24***	.26***
Personal belief in just world			–	-.04*
General Belief in Just World				–
Means	42.06	12.89	14.23	27.57
SD	10.42	4.24	5.29	5.33
A	.94	.73	.92	.85

*** $p < .001$. * $p < .05$.

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations and internal satisfactory index (alpha coefficient) of all the scales of study. The reliability analysis shows satisfactory internal consistency for each scale. Table 1 also displays the correlation between the variables of the study. Findings indicate that depression was significantly correlated with Day to Day Life Perceived Discrimination Measure, Personal BJW Scale and General BJW Scale. Depression was

significant and positively correlated with Day to Day Life Perceived Discrimination Measure and General BJW Scale at 0.001 level and significantly negatively correlated with Personal BJW Scale at 0.001 level (**p < .001).

Table 2. Regression analysis for perceived discrimination Predicting Depression (PDM) among Transgender (N = 153).

Predictor Variables	B	SEB	β	t	P
PDM	.15	.03	.364	4.80	.000

***p < .001, *p < .05

Table 2 shows the results of linear regression analysis to demonstrate the effect of independent variables, which were computed independently to predict depression. The table demonstrates the analysis of simple regression for perceived discrimination as a predictor of depression among transgender. Results indicate that the model is significant { $F(1, 151) = 23.07, p < .001$ } and PDM ($\beta = .364, t = 4.80, p = .000$) is a significant predictor of depression among transgender people and the table also demonstrated 13% variance in depression that could be attributed to PDM ($R^2 = .13$).

Table 3. Moderating Role of Personal Belief in Just World between Perceived Discrimination and Depression (N = 153).

Predictors	ΔR^2	β
Step I	.13	
PD		.364***
Step II	.16	
PD		.318***
PBJW		-.201**
Step III	.18	
PD x PBJW		-.717*
Total R^2	.47	

Note. PD = day to day life perceived discrimination measure and PBJW = personal belief in just world
 ***p < .001. *p < .05.

Table 3 depicts Personal BJW as significant moderating variable between perceived discrimination and depression. Hierarchical regression analysis is used for determining

its moderation role. Regression analysis is performed in three steps and all three models of this analysis are significant. In the first model { $R^2 = .13, F(1, 151) = 23.07, p < .001$ } perceived discrimination is positively predicting depression ($\beta = .364, t = 4.80, p < .001$) and it indicates 13% variance in depression, which could be attributed to perceived discrimination. In the second model personal BJW is entered. This model is overall significant { $F(2, 150) = 15.45, p < .001$ } in which perceived discrimination is positively ($\beta = .318, t = 4.17, p < .001$) and personal BJW is negatively ($\beta = -.201, t = -2.633, p < .01$) contributing to prediction of depression. This model significantly adds to the explained variance of depression { $\Delta R^2 = .04, \Delta F(1, 150) = 6.94, p < .01$ }. The third model is the final model of the investigation in which the product of perceived discrimination and depression is entered for testing the moderated influence of personal belief in just world in relationship between perceived discrimination and depression. The overall model is significant { $F(3, 149) = 12.29, p < .001$ } and shows significant interactive effect of personal BJW and perceived discrimination on depression ($\beta = -.717, t = -2.264, p < .05$). This interactive effect added 3% variance in depression { $\Delta R^2 = .03, \Delta F(1, 149) = 5.13, p < .05$ }.

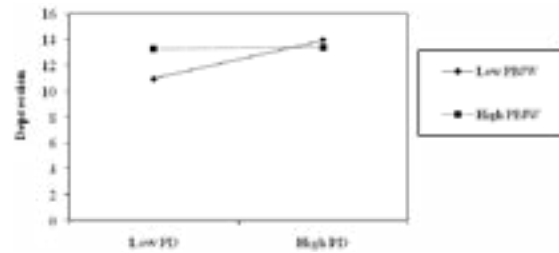


Figure 1. Interactive effect of Personal BJW and Perceived discrimination on Depression

Figure 1 shows the predicted level of perceived discrimination as a function of level of depression with high and low level of personal BJW. The slope for high personal BJW depicts less variance in depression due to low and high level of perceived discrimination. If personal BJW is high then no change occurs in depression irrespective of whether perceived discrimination level is high or low. However, positive relationship between perceived

discrimination and depression becomes strong when it is moderated by low level of personal BJW as low personal BJW strengthens the relationship of perceived discrimination and depression. As the figure shows, the low level of personal BJW and high level of perceived discrimination leads toward high level of depression.

Additional Findings

Table 4. Predicting Moderating Role of General Belief in Just World between Perceived Discrimination and Depression (N = 153).

Predictors	ΔR^2	β
Step I	.13	
PD		.364***
Step II	.15	
PD		.321***
GBJW		.183*
Step III	.15	
PD x GBJW		.168
Total R ²	.46	

Note. PD = day to day life perceived discrimination measure and GBJW = general belief in just world

*** $p < .001$. * $p < .05$.

Table 4 depicts general BJW as non significant moderating variable between perceived discrimination and depression. Hierarchical regression analysis is used for determining its moderation role. Regression analysis is performed in three steps and two step analysis are significant and the third step result was non significant. In the first model $\{R^2 = .13, F(1,151) = 23.07, p < .001\}$ perceived discrimination is positively predicting depression ($\beta = .364, t = 4.80, p < .001$) and it indicates 13% variance in depression, which could be attributed to perceived discrimination. In the second model general BJW is entered. This model is totally significant $\{F(2,150) = 14.71, p < .001\}$ in which perceived discrimination positively ($\beta = .321, t = 4.17, p < .001$) and general BJW also positively ($\beta = .183, t = 2.176, p < .01$) contributes to prediction of depression. This model added significantly in the explained variance of depression $\{\Delta R^2 = .03, \Delta F(1,150) = 5.64, p <$

$.05\}$. The third model is the final model of the investigation in which the product of perceived discrimination and depression is entered for testing the moderated influence of general belief in just world in relationship between perceived discrimination and depression. The overall model is significant $\{F(3,149) = 9.76, p < .001\}$, but shows non significant interactive effect of general BJW and perceived discrimination on depression ($\beta = .168, t = 2.47, p > .05$). It indicates that general belief in just world didn't minimize the level of depression due to perceived discrimination.

Discussion

The study was aimed at examining the association between perception of discrimination and depression, and moderating role of beliefs in a just world among transgender people. Overall findings suggested that perceived discrimination predicts depression, and belief in just world serves as a moderator for the transgender.

The present study was carried out to find out the connection between perception of discrimination and depression. Our first hypothesis was accepted as perceived discrimination, which has positive significant correlation with depression. These findings are supported by previous research in which depression was found to be related to most common psychological health problems (Nemoto, Bodeker, & Iwamoto, 2011), which might be caused by discrimination in the daily life experiences of these individuals (Koken, Bimbi & Parsons, 2009). Further, empirical evidence suggests that perceived discrimination is linked to increased risk for depression (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Polanco-Roman & Miranda, 2013).

In the present study, it was further hypothesized that personal BJW would moderate the relationship between perception of discrimination and mental health variables. Findings supported this hypothesis as personal belief in just world moderates the relationship between perceived discrimination and depression (see Table 3). Literature on the moderating role of belief in just world between perceived discrimination and depression support

our findings (Ritter, Benson, & Snyder, 1990). Findings of Otto et al. (2006) also described personal belief in just world as negatively related with depression and minimizing its level. Dalbert (2001) explained that belief in just world supports the adjustment and handling methods reduce stress and enhance mental health. Lipkus et al. (1996) also reported that personal belief in just world has significant effect on depression.

Analysis was carried out to further investigate general belief in just play moderating role in relationship of perceived discrimination and depression then the result would indicate that general BJW didn't moderate the relationship of perceived discrimination and depression. General BJW didn't give the experiences of personal circumstances of life which transgender people face on a daily basis. So, from the general point of view belief can lessen the intensity of pain, but this relationship didn't exist in the present study.

Conclusion and Implications

In this study it has been observed that the special population of transgender faces discrimination, which leads to depression. On the other hand, if they hold strong personal belief in just world then effect of discrimination was minimized, but general BJW didn't play a moderating role in context of Pakistani culture. The research is valuable because it is the first one in Pakistan in which problems of transgender were explored with relevance of discrimination and depression. The present research also establishes the role of BJW as a moderator. The study has implications in therapeutic interventions. Transgender people face adjustment problems in their daily life due to the discriminatory behavior of majorities in Pakistan. In clinical/counseling setting the transgender individuals can be helped to solve their adjustment problems by reducing depression due to discrimination. Counselors can use belief in just world to decrease the level of depression.

Limitations and Suggestions

Certain limitations were found in this study like there were challenges in the approach to the transgender population, which restricts

sampling and conscription strategies. Language, expression and terms of transgender population are different from those of common people and to make a sense of their conversation was difficult. The following suggestions for future research are recommended: Comparative research is needed on sample of transgender by birth and individuals having gender identity disorder, and other categories of gender dysphoria. Further research is also required on laws, crime and attitude of police and transgender who are convicted, and are in prisons, to investigate their experiences. Research can be conducted to plan intervention and include belief in just world through cognitive behavior therapy in transgender population to minimize the effect of discrimination on mental health.

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