

## **Myths about *Hijras* (Male-to-Female Transgender of *Hijra* Community)? Role of Gender and Commonly Held Belief about Them**

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*Hijras* are male-to-female transgender individuals living in the form of community since centuries in Pakistan. Present study was planned to explore belief in myths related to *hijras* along role of participants' gender and one's concept of "who are *hijras*" in these beliefs. Current study is cross-sectional and survey method was used for data collection. Convenience sampling was used for sample selection. Myths related to *Hijras* Scale was used for data collection from sample of 350 individuals with age 18-65 years. Findings show that out of 12 myths, belief on 4 myths were strongly held by the sample that included belief in their forcibly taking away child born with sexual deformity (intersex); having strength in their curses and blessings; shunning their demands bring adversities to the person; and *hijras* not liking anybody interfering in their social errands. Women had strong belief in myths as compared to men and those who believed that *hijras* are intersex they had more strong belief in myths than their counterparts. Findings are discussed in cultural context.

*Keyword.* Gender nonconformity, transgender, intersex, *hijras*, *Khusra*, eunuch, myths, stereotypes

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Myths are stereotypes about any phenomenon or social object reflecting person's "knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some social groups" (Hamilton & Troler as cited in Hamilton, Sherman, Crump, & Spencer-Rodgers, 2009, p. 179) which may or may not be true (Collins Cobuild, 2003, p. 945) and positive; are based on essentialism exaggerated, causing prejudices, biases, and self-fulfilling prophecies. These can be cultural stereotypes that may be consensually held (Jussim, Cain, Crawford, Harber, & Cohen, 2009). Eagly in 1987 gave **social role theory**. People are often associated with the role they perform in the society and the generalised view of their role is largely accepted and propagated. These are stereotypes formulated in process of observing people in their social roles. Changing stereotypes then become difficult for its origin linked with large body of belief system especially for society strongly condemning this change (see Whitley Jr. & Kite, 2006).

Therefore, in some cultures, gender nonconforming individuals are considered as neither men nor women and not necessarily be considered deviant as they occupy respectable social position; win sympathies by portraying being hermaphrodite/intersex; and exploit people's belief that they are blessed with some divine power (Nanda, 1999; Sharma, 2000; Totman, 2004; Winter, 2002). In South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), such a unique and special group exists called *hijras* or *khusras* (Haider & Bano, 2006; Nanda, 1999; Sharma, 2000; Talwar, 1999). They are male-to-female transgender (MtF TG) living in *hijra* community in the role of *guru* [mentor] and *chela* [disciple] (see Jami, 2005, 2014). Myths about *hijras* are cultural stereotypes held since centuries that effect mutual interaction between *hijras* and society (Khan & Ayub, 2003; Pande, 2004; Malloy, 1996; Sharma, 2000; Talwar, 2002). *Hijras* have shared system of beliefs and rules since centuries that might be the reason for maintenance of myths in the subcontinent through cultural transmission process (see Singh, 2001).

In South Asia, people believe in *hijras* blessed with power to bless newborn and others (Mahalingam, 2003), hence, socially powerful being *ottar nakhattar* [childless], asexual, people do fear this dogma (also see Singh, 2001; Sharma, 2000; Talwar, 1999; Winter, 2002), hence, avoid refuting to *hijras'* demands while their asking *wadhahi* [alms at the birth of male child and on marriage of male son] and get exploited by *hijras* because of this stereotypic view. It is believed that people's refusal to give alms bring into verbal abuse, curses, and on rare occasions taking off their

garments to show genitals at the part of *hijras* (Nanda, 1999; Sharma, 2000). Participants in Riaz's (1996) study in Pakistan never admitted actual performance of this act of showing genitals.

Belief about *hijras* being neither man nor woman is found in Hindu mythology where androgyny is considered a spiritual characteristic that may be a leading cause for much tolerance for *hijras* in South Asia (see Nanda, 1999; Pande, 2004; Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties, Karnataka [PUCL-K], Sep 2003). In some of the mythologies, being *hijra* was taken as a curse for a man becoming woman (Pande, 2004). Nevertheless, *hijras* in Pakistan (Jami, 2005; see also Teh, 2001 for *Mukhanath* of Malaysia) propagate their identification with the group of *Mukhanath* in *Haram Sharif* at Makkah and Majid-e-Nabwi (Mosque of Prophet Muhammad [SAW]) at Madina (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), who were appointed as care takers at these Holy places centuries ago. Therefore, portray themselves as pious and holy (Pande, 2004; Sharma, 2000; Teh, 2001). Another belief is that 'the shirt of Muhammad (SAW)' kept in Cairo was guarded by eunuch (Khan & Ayub, 2003, p.155). Such myths may be propagated because historically eunuchs had been in the role of taking care of temples, servants in Mosque of Jerusalem, Madina, and Kaba (see Roscoe, 1997). Such rationalizations seem significant to justify one's social role as per social role theory that regulates interaction between *hijras* and people in society.

There is a myth that "*hijra* community claims the custody of a child born with sexual deformity" (Nanda, 1999; Riaz, 1996; Sharma, 2000). Nanda (1999) and Riaz (1996) did not find any evidence of support to such an impression in their research as recruitment is mostly voluntary that too in adolescence. Riaz found that it is a misconception that *hijras* are individuals with intermediate sex (hermaphrodite or intersex). Nevertheless, Sharma (2000) and Singh (2001) reported such cases which were victim of forcible taking away from parents at the time of childhood. Talwar (1999) believes that such stories circulate because of "normal" people's hostile prejudice towards *hijras*, otherwise, it's not possible in present days. To maintain this social role both *hijras* and society play their role and propagate myths. Sharma (2002) found that 68% of *hijras* join community voluntarily while remaining was subjected to coercion. Out of total, 32% were handed over by parents themselves at various ages

among which 50% were handed over when they were few days old (see also Pande, 2004).

Another misconception is that majority of *khusras* [a subculture in *hijra* community born with sexual deformities] are born to prostitutes (Riaz, 1996). Another myth is that “parents themselves hand over such a child to *hijra* community” (Sharma, 2000). Talwar (1999) legally reviewed the standing of such act and pronounced that this is not possible in present days for growing awareness about the corrective surgeries as a possibility. Another common belief is that “at the birth of a child the *hijras* come (to home) to see the sex of the child” (Sharma, 2000; Talwar, 1999). Another allegation is that they forcibly castrate the children by kidnapping them which does not hold any truth as per research evidences. This may be because of the reason that in the society there is tendency to kidnap children and maimed by adults to be used for begging. So, people also imagine the same for the *hijras* (Talwar, 1999). People who do not fit in women and men role have appeared in history, legends, and narratives from almost every culture. They offer mythological explanation to this phenomenon. These myths are functional for a society, otherwise these would not have existed (Pande, 2004).

When anyone like *hijras* deviate from their social roles they violate the stereotypes, hence, get rejection and maintains their membership in *hijra* community. The children taken away forcibly by *hijras* sometimes do not adjust in the *hijra* community. They run away from place to place, but ultimately, they take refuge in the *hijra* community for their survival and *hijras* force them to live with them (Sharma, 2000), this supports point of social role theory.

A *hijra* in Sharma’s study (2000) reported, even street dog is better off than them. Participants ( $N = 20$ ) of his study perceived that people consider them as dirty drain; give away alms only when pressurized; do not respect them; don’t accept them in their houses because they consider *hijras* as inferior human beings; believe that *hijras* are born out of wedlock. Children tease them and throw stones on them when they go for asking alms. They are treated as untouchables and stigmatized. People even look down upon the person who is walking with them in street. In public places, their appearance inflicts fear of stigma in others. People put insulting remarks, still people do consider them *karma* of God’s will (see also Winter, 2002). Such attitudes

and behaviours extended towards *hijras* are derivatives of myths about them which needs to be studied in Pakistani context.

In our society, men interact more frequently with *hijras* as compare to women. They get more chance of having information about *hijras'* behaviors and activities. Even in the functions and weddings, *hijras* perform in male sitting areas and they are not allowed to go to female sitting areas. Considering the interaction as an important variable in determining the attitude of the people, men are less likely to have belief in myths than women (Nanda, 1999; Sharma, 2000; Winter, 2002).

Stereotypes are cognitive schemas to reduce the complex stimulus in the environment in a more simplified form for making it more manageable to handle large amount of information. One tries to make out of the situation in one point in time that may have negative consequences if information processing is not done effectively (Whitley Jr. & Kite, 2006). Prejudices develop when people are unable to appreciate group members as individuals (Levy & Hughes, 2009). Any man who deviates from normative belief of gender are categorised as *hijra* based on schemas built over a period. These facilitate us in comprehending any such deviant behaviours in ambiguous situations. Many a time people respond towards *hijras* in the light of stereotypes that get activated in the process of interaction. These sometimes mislead the person by categorizing all gender variant people in one homogenous category as people in Pakistan do not know about gender diversity in *hijra* community (see Haider & Bano, 2006).

Literature suggests that gender bias has implicit component that may operate beyond conscious control (Kihlstrom, 1987, 1999) and exert a profound influence on social behaviour, including attitudes and self-concept (see Aidman & Carroll, 2003). Both social role theory and cognitive perspectives emphasize the significance of myths related to *hijras* in attitudes and behaviours of people.

In the process of social interaction, people tend to respond and show their attitudes on the basis of the most accessible information in the memory. Sometimes, one does not retrieve complete information from memory, but rely on most readily available previously formed judgment. Such judgments contribute a lot in stability of attitudes (Schwarz, 2008). Attitudes are many times based on stereotypes that involve attributing specific characteristics or categorizing to individuals being member of a group that get activated quickly in the presence of cues, often at unconscious level

(see also Devine & Sharp, 2009; Herek, 2009). Stereotypes are social norms and one feels okay about these when having the idea that others also think the same way. Therefore, these need to be studied in social context (Stangor, 2009). On the basis of literature it is assumed that:

1. Women have more strong belief in myths related to *hijras* than men.
2. Those who believe that *hijras* are intersex/ hermaphrodite (born with sexual deformity) have more strong belief in myths than those who believe that they are MtF TG.

## **Method**

### **Myths related to *Hijras* Scale**

It was a 12 items Likert-type scale developed by Jami (2012) having scoring categories *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (1). None was reverse scoring item. High score meant strong belief in myths related to *hijras* of *hijra* community. Minimum score achieved could be 12 and maximum 60. Three subscales were Asexuality (5 items; 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) referring to the myths related to asexual status of *hijras* like birth of asexual child brings in *hijras*' notice, their claim for custody of such a child, parents' willful handing over of such a child to *hijras*, adding new *hijras* to *hijra* community on the basis of their asexuality, and finally their getting cutoff from original families because of stigma of asexuality. Nature (4 items; 2, 4, 6, and 12) referred to *hijras*' innate tendencies of getting alms aggressively, considering them product of their parent's sins, having vulgar tendencies, and their inability to change their innate tendencies. Saintry (3 items; 1, 3, and 5) referred to *hijras* being divine having power in their blessings and curses, bringing worries to whosoever shuns them, and disliking other to fiddle with them. Test-retest reliability was established as an indicator of temporal stability. For establishing the temporal stability of MHS, scale was re-administered with a time gap of 3 ½ months on the same sample ( $N = 37$ ) was .56. All the subscales were significantly correlated with each other that reflects construct validity of the measure (Jami, 2012).

### **Sample**

It consisted of 350 individuals with age 18-65 years ( $M = 30.6$ ;  $SD = 5.19$ ). Inclusion criteria for sample selection were minimum education 10<sup>th</sup> grade, age 18

years, and it included those who did not have any relation within *hijra* community. Only one person from a family was included in the sample. No other variable was controlled. Data were collected from Rawalpindi/ Islamabad. Convenient sampling was utilized as a technique for sample selection. Following is the detailed demographic information of the sample.

Table 1

*Frequency and Percentages on Demographic Variables (N = 350)*

Demographic Variables	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	166	47.4
Women	184	52.6
<b>Education</b>		
Matric (10 <sup>th</sup> grade)	62	17.7
Intermediate (12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	78	22.3
Graduate	113	32.3
Postgraduate	95	27.1
Missing	2	.6
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	165	47.1
Unmarried	184	52.6
<b>Frequency of Interaction</b>		
Never	12	3.4
Once in a year	169	48.3
Once in a month	102	29.1
Once in a week	41	11.7
Everyday	26	7.4

## **Procedure**

Those who were meeting the inclusion criteria were handed over the scale. They were requested to follow the instructions carefully while responding to the items. However, consent form was signed if they agreed to participate in the research. They were also requested to feel free to comment about the items if they felt any

ambiguity in these. They were told that there were no right and wrong answers and that they had to respond in the light of their personal belief. Complete confidentiality and anonymity was assured and they were asked not to mention their names on the scale if they desire so.

## Results

Data were analyzed through SPSS 18. Independent sample t-test was computed to explore gender differences in beliefs in myths related to *hijras*. Independent sample *t*-test was also used to explore difference in belief of those who consider *hijras* to be intersex or MtF TGs. Frequencies and percentages were computed to explore relative strength of beliefs of sample in each myth.

Table 2 shows significant gender differences along overall myths and saintly concept of *hijras* with medium effect size and a tilt towards significance in nature related myths of *hijras*. Women have significantly more strong belief in these myths than men. Hence, first hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

Table 2

*Mean, Standard Deviations, and t-value along Gender (N = 350)*

Scales	Men	Women	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	( <i>n</i> = 166)	( <i>n</i> = 184)			LL	UL	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )					
MHS	31.6(3.9)	33.4(4.4)	3.9	.00	-2.6	-.87	-.43
Asexuality	12.3(2.4)	12.6(2.4)	1.0	.29	-.79	.24	-.12
Nature	10.2(2.4)	10.7(2.6)	1.8	.06	-1.02	.03	-.12
Saintly	9.1(2.3)	10.1(2.6)	3.8	.00	-1.5	-.47	-.41

For the comparison, those who believed that *hijras* are intersex/hermaphrodite individuals ( $n = 179$ ) and those who believed that *hijras* are intersex/ hermaphrodite and MtF TGs ( $n = 154$ ), Independent sample  $t$ -test was carried out. Those who believed that *hijras* are MtF TGs only ( $n = 17$ ) were not included in the analysis as their number was too low. Hence, Hypothesis 2 was molded as those who believe that *hijras* are intersex/hermaphrodite have more strong belief in myths than those who believe that *hijras* are both intersex/ hermaphrodite and MtF TGs (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Mean, Standard Deviations, and t-test along Belief in Who are Hijras (N = 333)*

	Intersex	Both Intersex		95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>	
	( $n = 179$ )	and MtF					
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t</i> (331)	<i>p</i>	LL	UL	
MHS	33.3(4.1)	32.0(4.4)	2.6	.01	.30	2.1	.31
Asexuality	12.7(2.5)	12.4(2.4)	1.0	.30	-.25	.80	.12
Nature	10.7(2.5)	10.3(2.5)	1.2	.22	-.20	.90	.16
Saintly	9.9(2.4)	9.3(2.6)	2.2	.03	.06	1.1	.24

Results in Table 3 reveal significant difference between two groups exist on overall myths and myths related to saintly characteristics having weak effect size. Only those believing that *hijras* are born with sexual deformities have more strong belief in myths than those believing that they are both intersex and MtF TGs.

**Relative Strength of Beliefs in Myths**

For determining strength in myths, mean and standard deviations, and frequencies and percentages for each myth are computed. Table 4 shows frequencies and percentages along myths related to *hijras*. Most of agreement is evident in item no. 1, 3, and 4; neutral for item 5 and 8; and for remaining items disagreement is more evident. For only four items (1, 3, 4, and 8), a general trend of agreement is observed in mean, for remaining items values are less than 3 (cutoff point for each item), hence showing more tilt towards disagreement; least is observed for item no. 9 and 2.

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviations, Frequencies and Percentages Showing Degree of Agreement along Items of MHS (N = 350)

Item no.	No. of items	M	SD	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	NEU f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)
1	They don't like fiddling with them.	<b>3.21</b>	1.26	34(9.7)	80(22.9)	83(23.7)	<b>85(24.3)</b>	<b>68(19.4)</b>
2	Insisting while asking alms is their distinct characteristic.	<u>2.1</u>	1.0	<b>104(29.7)</b>	<b>153(43.7)</b>	52(14.9)	35(10)	6(1.7)
3	Their blessings and curses hold effects.	<b>3.46</b>	1.1	15(4.3)	47(13.4)	125(35.7)	<b>89(25.4)</b>	<b>74(21.1)</b>
4	They are product of their parents sins.	<b>3.65</b>	1.14	18(5.1)	23(6.6)	133(38.0)	<b>66(18.9)</b>	<b>110(31.4)</b>
5	Shunning them bring worries.	2.94	1.05	28(8)	86(24.6)	<b>148(42.3)</b>	55(15.7)	33(9.4)
6	For their vulgarity they are not welcomed in daughters' weddings and not allowed to go in female wing.	2.3	1.16	<b>98(28)</b>	<b>131(37.4)</b>	58(16.6)	45(12.9)	18(5.1)
7	On knowing about birth of an intersex child, they come and claim custody.	2.24	.90	<b>77(22)</b>	<b>134(38.3)</b>	120(34.3)	15(4.3)	4(1.1)
8	Parents themselves handover such a child to <i>hijras</i> .	<b>3.1</b>	.92	15(4.3)	60(17.1)	<b>178(50.9)</b>	69(19.7)	28(8)
9	For increasing their income new <i>hijras</i> are inducted in the community.	<u>2.1</u>	.84	<b>90(25.7)</b>	<b>150(42.9)</b>	97(27.7)	11(3.1)	2(.6)
10	Visiting home of a new born child is to actually investigate about sex of the child.	2.61	.98	<b>49(14)</b>	<b>106(30.3)</b>	135(38.6)	51(14.6)	9(2.6)
11	One who goes to <i>hijra</i> community gets cutoff from the family for ever.	2.44	.96	<b>56(16)</b>	<b>139(39.7)</b>	108(30.9)	40(11.4)	7(2)
12	Even if given job they cannot mend their ways.	2.42	1.1	<b>75(21.4)</b>	<b>132(37.7)</b>	77(22)	54(15.4)	12(3.4)

Note. SDA = Strongly disagree; DA = Disagree; NEU = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree. Original items are in Urdu. Here items are only mentioned in English for readers. Boldface shows the more frequency and percentage under respective category of agreement and disagreement.

## Discussion

Being the part of South Asia and because of influence of Hinduism in our culture, some myths of Indian mythology are reflected in our culture. Like it is believed that their curse and blessings hold special affects (Sharma, 2000; Talwar, 2002). *Hijras* propagate that those who do not oblige to their demands may suffer from some heavenly wrath. *Hijras* use this tool more frequently to exploit others to earn money; especially, women and children are the two target populations where they can use this exploitation more successfully. Women are more likely to be effected by the myths and impressions made by the *hijras* (Nanda, 1999; Sharma, 2000; Winter, 2002). So in this scenario, women have strong belief in these myths. *Hijras* during process of socialization also learn how to interact with men and women as dirty language is not to be used with woman (Nanda, 1999; Riaz, 1996; Sharma, 2000), therefore, women develop much soft corner for *hijras*. Often, gender differences appear in inventories that are based on gender stereotypes. Women endorse more stereotypes implicitly than explicitly (Swim & Hyers, 2009). This psychological discourse considering women to be irrational than men is governed by patriarchal power that maintains rigid division based on gender stereotypes (Batalha, 2006).

Early researches have found that those who believe in genetic factors for transsexuals showed much acceptability than those who believed them to be product of environment (Antoszewski, Kasielska, Jedrzejczak, & Kruk- Jeromin, 2007). More than half of the people still had very strong belief that *hijras* are hemaphrodites/intersex or having genetic cause (see also Khan & Ayub, 2003; Haider & Bano, 1996; Nanda, 1999; Riaz, 1996; Sharma, 2000; for TS see Antoszewski et al., 2007; for *Waria* see Boellstorff, 2004; for *maknayah* see Teh, 2001; for *Kathoe*y see Totman, 2004; Winter, 2002). Therefore, differences along one's concept of *hijra* on belief in myths were observed. Those who believed that *hijras* are born with sexual deformities had more strong belief in myths that too related to saintly characteristics of *hijras* than those who believed that *hijras* are both MtF TGs and hemaphrodites/intersex. Very significant result might have appeared if compared with those who believed that *hijras* are MtF TGs only. Even this belief held by more number of participants that they are born intersex/hermaphrodite itself is a myth that is proved in the study. Presently, very few

participants endorsed that *hijras* are MtF TGs only that was why their data were excluded from analysis.

With respect to level of agreement with each item based on myth, increased agreement is observed on four items referring to *hijras* not liking fiddling with them; their blessings and curses being effective; *hijras* being product of their parents' sins; and parents themselves hand over such children born with sexual deformity to *hijras*. Evidences of these findings are also available in anthropological researches (see Nanda, 1999; Sharma, 2000). Disagreement exists on remaining items and much frequency of responses is observed in neutral category. This might reflect state of dissonance while responding to statements related to any social object or group (see Bohner & Wanke, 2002; Hogg & Vaughan, 2005).

Dissonance to either go along strongly held traditional beliefs about *hijras* or to have less superstitious view in the light of modernism or lack of interaction with *hijras* (Tolley & Ranzijn's, 2006; Lovett & Mannie de Saxe, 2006) might be function of young age and more education reflected in demographics of sample. This shows ambivalence in their perceptions while thinking about *hijras*, and these demographic variables might have took central position while responding to items (see Bohner & Wanke, 2002; Conner & Armitage, 2008; Hogg & Vaughan, 2005; Maio, Olson, Bernard, & Luke, 2006). Level of interaction in sample also showed that maximum number of participants used to rarely meet *hijras* (48.3% yearly) against those who used to meet daily (7.4%); this might have created dissonance in responding to the items.

This study is a research of its own kind providing an empirical evidences of myths related to *hijras* and how these are related to other relevant constructs. Earlier records of myths on *hijras* are anthropological, sociological, or historical archives. Present is the first psychological study to highlight significance of these. To justify ones standing and status, deviants often give justifications and excuses for their deviant behaviours and quote only those aspects in religious practices that justify their existence (see Liska, 1987; Rubington & Weinberg, 1987; Thio, 1988). Same is true in case of *hijras* to justify their existence from any where (Hinduism or Islam) for generating acceptance among general public (see Nanda, 1999). Myths related to them are unique example of these propagated justifications.

Stereotyping is outcome of categorizing process based on cultural connotation of sexual minority and has grounds in sexual stigma like asexuality in *hijras*. Even perceiving individual differences among sexual minorities, still stereotypes are generalized on all group members based on entitativity (Hamilton et al., 2009; Herek, 2009). Not only social categorization, but self-categorization also activates stereotypes which influence behaviour. Stereotypes help in categorization for simplicity, especially, if it is based on categorizing one in ingroup or outgroup which is an important aspect of social identity. Stereotypes are based on role which is assigned to being member of any group (Campbell & Storo, 1994; Stangor, 2009).

Better attitude leads to better practice. Effective health promotion for any group is dependent upon a detailed understanding of their culture and social practices (Kane, 2006; Adams, Braun, & McCreanor, 2008). Attitudes serve the cognitive and emotional needs of the people i.e., people high in need of affect often possess extreme attitudes (Bohner & Wanke, 2002; Hogg & Vaughan, 2005; Maio & Esses, 2001). If the people have stereotypic view of *hijras* that they hoard money in an obnoxious, it's likely to generate fear and negativity. Therefore, while interacting with *hijras*, people are likely to extend negative attitude and behaviour or vice versa based on stereotypes/myths.

Myths are functional in nature and maintain the power imbalance in patriarchal society (Ahmad & Kamal, 2000) especially in case of sexual minorities. Studying rape myths have been found to be an important indicator of sexism (Swim & Hyers, 2009) showing that men had more strong beliefs in myths (Ahmad & Kamal, 2000; Lief, 1998) that promote sexism. At the cognitive level, it facilitates in object appraisal and simplify interaction with the object, hence, has value-expressive function. According to Lather, "Feminist researchers are sensitized to examine the gaps between mythology and lived experiences" (as cited in Oswald & Culton, 2003, p. 72).

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

1. Data of those who believed that *hijras* are MtF TGs only was excluded in analysis comparing belief in myths along participants' concept of *hijras*. In future, equal number of people believing in three categories could be taken to compare the attitudes to get authentic results.

2. Sample was less, heterogeneous, and many variables were not controlled in sample selection. In future, more homogenous group by controlling certain variables and large sample should be included to ensure external validity of findings.
3. Many changes regarding *hijras* status in Pakistan has emerged since data collection. Therefore, belief in myths need to be explored again in changing scenario.
4. In current study, differences on belief in myths along gender and one's concept of *hijras* were explored, in future, difference along age, education, marital status, etc. could also be explored.

### Conclusion

As suggested in existing literature, current study also revealed people's strong belief in *hijras*' saintly characteristics that is holding divine power in their curse and blessings, and if any one shun them he/she bring into worry. It was strongly believed that *hijras* do not like anybody who interferes in their social errands and are aggressive and vulgar. Such beliefs are related to *hijras*' asexuality. People held stereotypic beliefs in *hijras* inability to change themselves; and being product of their parents' sins. Having belief in myths may prevent people in interacting with *hijras* by giving rise to negative attitudes towards them. Findings showed that women and those who believed that *hijras* are intersex/hermaphrodite had more strong belief in myths, especially, in *hijras*' saintly characteristics. Therefore, such people may have more tolerance for *hijras* social role.

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