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Sexuality, Poverty and Law

Living on the Periphery: The *Khawaja Siras* of Pakistan

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Abbreviations

CNIC   Computerised National Identity Card
HIV   Human Immunodeficiency Virus
KS   *Khawaja Sira(s)*
NGO   Non-governmental organisation
PKR   Pakistani rupee
WPD   Web of poverty's disadvantages

Glossary

Imam	Person (male) who leads prayers in a mosque
Kaffan	White cloth in which dead bodies are wrapped before burial
Muharram	An annual celebration in the month of Muharram commemorates the death of Husayn, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and his retinue
Napak	The literal meaning is 'being unclean'. In this context it refers to the exclusion of an individual from performing religious practices and duties because of 'being unclean', according to religious prescriptions
Nikkah	The Muslim legal contract of marriage
Ramadan	The ninth month in the Islamic calendar. It is a period of prayer, fasting, charity-giving and self-accountability for Muslims

Executive summary

Academic literature suggests that development is inherently heteronormative in its narratives, policies and practices: as a result, 'heterosexuality is normalized, naturalized, and privileged in societies of the global South, in the international development field, and in colonial and post/neocolonial narratives of the so-called Third World or global South' (Lind 2010: 7). Thus, people with non-conforming gender and sexual identities living in poverty are rendered invisible in development. In an attempt to counter this invisibility, this report investigates the experiences of exclusion encountered by *Khawaja Siras* (KS), a gender and sexual minority in Pakistan. It also investigates the role of a gender identity-based programme in bringing about changes in their experience of exclusion.

The KS challenge the social and biological determinations of gender and sexual identity in the patriarchal and heteronormative society of Pakistan. They have been a part of the sub-continent's history for centuries (Reddy 2005). In the Mughal era the KS served as army generals, harem guards and advisers to emperors (*ibid.*). However, with the onset of British rule and the fragmentation of the Mughal courts, KS were stripped of their powerful positions and no longer participated in government (Pamment 2010). Today they experience extreme levels of stigmatisation and according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan are the most disadvantaged group in Pakistan, suffering exclusion in social, cultural, economic and political spaces (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2011).

Persistent discrimination against this non-conforming minority prompted the Pakistan Supreme Court to take action in 2009, when the court recognised the gender identity of KS. As a result of the ruling, KS were given a 'third gender' status, which was to appear on all of their official documents, and they were accorded the right to vote as KS and to contest elections. Following this, in 2012 the court's subsequent ruling also guaranteed a series of – previously denied – inheritance rights; assured them of protection from abuse by the police and other organs of the state; and directed provincial government agencies to provide KS access to health care, education and employment (Redding 2012).

Despite this recognition of their identity and subsequent rights, normative societal prescriptions still push KS to the periphery, denying them full participation in society. This denial not only robs them of livelihood opportunities and education, but also subjects them to extreme levels of abuse at the hands of family and various social actors. Recognising the marginalisation of KS, Akhuwat-Fountain House, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Lahore, Pakistan, began the '*Khawaja Siras* Socio-Economic Rehabilitation Programme'. This programme aims to alleviate the exclusion experienced by KS to help them tap into the economic and social resources available in society.

This case study focuses on understanding the role played by this NGO-run, gender identity-based programme in alleviating the poverty KS experience. To carry out this investigation, the study focuses on understanding the social and economic exclusion KS experience. It also aims to analyse how the gender identity-based programme that Akhuwat-Fountain House initiated is changing this situation.

This study draws on primary data collected in June 2015 through in-depth semi-structured interviews with six KS and Akhuwat-Fountain House's programme manager. This research is geographically limited to Lahore because this is where the *Khawaja Siras* Socio-Economic Rehabilitation Programme works. Moreover, it is limited to studying the experiences of KS involved in the programme.

To conceptualise the exclusion KS experience, the report uses the web of poverty's disadvantages (WPD) that Chambers (2005) described. This multi-dimensional web recognises 12 interlocking and mutually reinforcing dimensions that inform the experience of poverty. An analysis using these dimensions allows for a thorough investigation into how KS experience poverty. By engaging through WPD with the poverty KS experience, this report draws attention to how they experience social and economic exclusion simultaneously.

Moreover, it highlights the centrality of their ascribed and legal inferiority in informing their experience of exclusion on other dimensions. It also brings to the fore how the gender identity-based programme has missed out a holistic analysis of the exclusion KS have experienced and has not addressed their main exclusionary dimension of ascribed and legal inferiority. However, the report recognises that the programme operates in a highly contested and volatile space, and the work it does is truly commendable.

This study's findings contribute to the local context literature on KS of Pakistan, while also contributing to the global literature on the connections between gender and sexuality and experiences of poverty. The general literature on this subject, specifically in the context of Pakistan, is inconclusive on the vital questions regarding a holistic view of their experience of exclusion and the ability of development programmes to tackle it.

This research fills this gap by providing a nuanced analysis of how KS experience exclusion in the social and economic facets of their lives. Moreover, it establishes how these dimensions of exclusion are interlinked and mutually reinforcing by tracing how ascribed and legal inferiority associated with the KS identity impinges on their access to livelihoods, physical health, living conditions, education, family support systems and sense of security.

Additionally, the global literature building linkages between non-conforming gender and sexual identities and KS' experience of poverty highlight the heteronormative assumptions that are dominant in development practices, policies and programmes (Bedford 2005; Cornwall and Jolly 2009). These assumptions are apparent in how development through its programmes interacts with heterosexual married couples and heterosexual sex relations (*ibid*.). This leads to non-conforming individuals becoming invisible in development practice.

As a result, theorists argue for the need to pay attention to the lived experience of the exclusions non-conforming individuals suffer and call out development's heteronormative presumptions. This study has contributed to the literature by researching the lived experience of exclusion that confronts KS in their daily lives, and has gone further by also identifying the interplay between different dimensions that subject them to this exclusion in Pakistan.

1 Introduction[1]

On a hot summer evening I was lost in a bazaar in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. I had just moved to the city to start a new job and was a bit daunted by my new surroundings. I had roamed around the whole bazaar it seemed to me a thousand times and yet was unable to find my way back to my office building. Seeing my plight and confusion a *Khawaja Sira* (KS), a gender and sexual minority in Pakistan, approached me; her reaction was of both amusement and concern. She understood that I was new to the city and with complete patience heard my woes about being lost and then directed me to the way to my office.

However, she was not satisfied with my navigational abilities and decided to walk with me to make sure that I reached my destination. After reaching my destination and walking away from each other I heard in the distance a few men hurling abuses at the KS, but she kept quiet and walked away. Over the course of my life, I have observed numerous similar instances of people harassing KS, every time in a different city but always in the same way. This has been the primary motivation for my research to understand the lives of KS through their personal experiences and in their own words.

This interest was furthered by an introduction to a gender identity-based programme that the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Akhuwat-Fountain House runs, which aims to reduce the social and economic exclusion of KS. The '*Khawaja Siras* Socio-Economic Rehabilitation Programme' – the KS programme – recognises the ambiguous gender expression of KS, which can be traced to their adoption of a 'burlesque femininity' (Pamment 2010: 30) by which they navigate between the prescribed male/female gender binary.

This programme was the first of its kind: development initiatives that the Pakistani government and foreign donor agencies have encouraged to address the plight of KS have only focused on health issues (Khan 2014) rather than addressing the systemic social and economic exclusion that result from their non-conforming gender and sexual identity.

Academic literature suggests that development is inherently heteronormative in its narratives, policies and practices. As a result, 'heterosexuality is normalized, naturalized, and privileged in societies of the global South, in the international development field, and in colonial and post/neocolonial narratives of the so-called Third World or global South' (Lind 2010: 7). Thus, people with non-conforming gender and sexual identities who live in poverty are rendered invisible in development. To counter this invisibility this study aims to investigate the poverty KS experience and the interaction of an NGO-initiated and -run development programme with poverty.

1.1 Scope of the study
The study and corresponding fieldwork focused on a single research question: how does a gender identity-based programme bring about changes in the everyday social and economic lives of KS?

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[1] The sub-section on key words within this section will expand on what the terms '*Khawaja Sira*' (KS), 'heteronormativity', 'exclusion and poverty', among others, mean for this report.

The main aims of the research were to:

1. Form an understanding of the links between the KS' identity and their experience of social and economic exclusion;
2. Analyse how a particular gender identity-based programme that specifically targets KS has brought about changes in their experience of social and economic exclusion.

This research incorporates an investigation of KS' experiences of social and economic exclusion, because without a nuanced understanding of these experiences it would not be possible to explore the role the KS programme plays. Based on this investigation, the study concludes that KS experience social and economic exclusion; that these experiences reinforce one another; and as a result, KS become trapped in a situation where discrimination that stems from social attitudes permeates into all facets of their lives. Moreover, the research also finds that the KS programme addresses a limited number of facets that inform their experience of exclusion.

The research and its investigations were informed by primary data collected in June 2015 through in-depth semi-structured interviews with six KS and the programme manager. The research was geographically limited to the city of Lahore where the KS programme operates. Moreover, it was limited to studying the experiences of KS involved in the programme.

1.2   Key words

This section highlights the key words and terminologies used throughout this report, and their meanings in the context of the research.

Khawaja Siras: intersex, transgender and transsexual individuals in Pakistan. This definition was established through my fieldwork in which KS themselves elaborated on a definition of their gender identity. In terms of sexuality, they do not consider themselves to be homosexual because they possess the 'soul' of a woman and are attracted to men, who for them are the opposite sex. I will elaborate more on the KS identity in the findings and analysis section of this report (Section 5).

Gender and sexuality: used in conjunction because both are socially constructed and 'both are about values and meanings, and both are concerned with norms that permit and constrain certain forms of social and sexual expression' (Runeborg 2008: 14). However, for more clarity it is important to consider both terms individually as well. Gender refers to a 'broad range of socially constructed relations that are based on, and which tend to correspond with, people's biological sex' (Gupta 2000; Ortner 1974 as cited in Oosterhoff, Waldman and Olerenshaw 2014: 13). Sexuality refers to 'the human capacity to experience and act on sexual needs and desires and to live according to self-determined sexual identities' (*ibid.*). Building on these definitions it can be seen that gender and sexuality both contribute to an individual's holistic identity of self and therefore need to be considered in relation to one another.

Heteronormativity: in this research, refers to 'institutionalisation of the idea that only heterosexuality is normal, and only particular kinds of heterosexual relations are normal', underpinned by the idea of a male/female binary (Hawkins and Jolly 2010: 6). All those who deviate from this model are referred to by the term *non-conforming*.

Exclusion and poverty: in this research, used interchangeably to refer to the social and economic deprivations KS experience based on their non-conforming gender and sexual identity.

1.3   Outline

The study proceeds in six sections. Section 2 locates the study's contribution within the existing literature on the connection between gender, sexuality and poverty within and outside the context of Pakistan. Section 3 outlines the methodology the study followed to answer the research question. Section 4 elaborates on Chambers' WPD (2005, 2007) as the study's conceptual framework and how it informs the study. Section 5 presents the definition of the KS gender and sexual identity and the nature of the KS programme as discovered through fieldwork. It then moves on to present the experiences of KS through the lens of WPD, and sets the scene for the analysis of how the interlocking dimensions of WPD explain the social and economic exclusion of KS. The section then aims to analyse the changes – if any – that the gender identity-based programme has brought about in addressing exclusion. Section 6 provides some concluding thoughts.

2 Background

This section explains how heteronormative assumptions govern individuals' lives in Pakistan. In this context, the section examines the history and contemporary lives of KS in Pakistan. It concludes by discussing the subject in relation to national and international literature on the interaction between gender, sexuality and poverty.

2.1 Pakistan: the heteronormative playing field

In Pakistan, social relations and hierarchies are framed by a heteronormative male/female gender binary, and the supremacy of heterosexuality as the only normal and legally acceptable sexual orientation (Pamment 2010). These preconceived notions mean that the bodies[2] embroiled in love, sex and relationships are conceived and recognised only within the ambit of 'state-recognised, family-approved and religiously-sanctioned'[3] heterosexual marriage (Khan 2014).

This is evident in the conceptualisation of the *nikkah* marriage ceremony as being between a man and woman; and family as a household formed around a husband and wife.[4] It is also evident in the country's criminalisation of non-heterosexual sex relations under Section 377 of the Pakistan Penal Code[5] (Dickson and Sanders 2014). This criminalisation infringes on the rights of people with non-conforming gender identities and sexual orientations, which makes them vulnerable to legal sanctions and insecurities, and also susceptible to continuous stigmatisation and discrimination, as I discuss below.

2.2 Historical background of *Khawaja Siras*

KS challenge the social and biological determinations of gender and sexual identity in Pakistan. They have been a part of the sub-continent's history for centuries (Reddy 2005). In the Mughal era, KS served as army generals, harem guards and advisers to emperors (*ibid.*). However, with the onset of British rule and the fragmentation of the Mughal courts, KS were stripped of their powerful positions and no longer participated in government (Pamment 2010). Moreover, this time period also witnessed the implementation of discriminatory colonial law that criminalised and sanctioned the KS.[6] This law remained intact in post-colonial Pakistan, solidifying the social stigmatisation informed by heteronormative shackles around KS gender and sexual identity (*ibid.*).

However, in response to the persistent discrimination KS experienced, the Supreme Court of Pakistan recognised their gender identity and rights in 2009.[7] As a result of the Supreme Court's ruling, KS were: given a 'third gender' status, which was to appear on all of their official documents and given the right to vote as KS and to contest elections. Following this, in 2012 the court's subsequent ruling also: guaranteed a series of – previously denied – inheritance rights; assured them of protection from abuse by the police and other organs of

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[2] Body is defined as a 'cultural text, a surface upon which culture can be written, a site for understanding the working of modern power' Reed (2013).
[3] These terms have been borrowed from Shireen El Feki's description of the heteronormativity prevalent in Egypt in *Sex and the Citadel* (2014:4).
[4] The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961 governs *nikkah* and family in Pakistan.
[5] Section 377: this legal provision, criminalising non-heteronormative sexualities, was put in place during the colonial era in 1860. It still exists today.
[6] See footnote 5.
[7] This activism on the part of the higher judiciary was triggered by the arrest of transgenders at a wedding party in 2004, and the subsequent protest by transgenders and petition by activists Dr Mohammad Aslam Khaki and Yasmin Haider (Redding 2012).

the state; and directed provincial government agencies to provide KS access to health care, education and employment (Redding 2012).

Despite these hallmark inclusions, KS still experience extreme levels of stigma and according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan are the most disadvantaged group in Pakistan; suffering exclusion in social, cultural, economic and political spaces (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2011). A survey on the acceptability of KS identity in society showed that only 14 per cent of Pakistanis would be friends with KS who wanted to be friends with them (Gallup and Gillani 2010). This highlights the extreme levels of marginalisation and stigma experienced by KS in Pakistan. Moreover, this reveals how normative societal prescriptions still push them to the periphery, denying them full participation in society.

2.3 Literature review

2.3.1 Global literature
Scholars argue that individuals with non-conforming gender and sexual identities are susceptible to marginalisation and poverty on the basis of their identity (Armas 2006, 2007; Campuzano 2008; Hawkins, Cornwall and Lewin 2011; Jolly 2010; Oosterhoff, Waldman and Olerenshaw 2014; Runeborg 2008). The experience of poverty for non-conforming individuals stems from their exclusion from society due to severe stigmatisation and discrimination (Jolly 2010).

Heteronormative approaches in development that fail to recognise gender identities and sexual orientations that fall outside the ambit of the male/female gender binary and that deviate from heterosexual sex relations inform these exclusionary forces (Hawkins and Jolly 2010). Moreover, these deeply entrenched exclusionary forces push non-conforming individuals to the periphery excluding them from society and economies. Armas (2007) highlights this by drawing attention to how social norms around sexuality spill over into other facets of life, and how employers and colleagues discriminate against transgender co-workers.

Despite these visible and deeply entrenched inequalities, development has a long-established reductionist position on gender and sexuality issues, which has resulted in the exclusion of fluid and complex gender and sexual identities from the development agenda (Armas 2007; Cornwall 2006; Gosine 2006; Jolly 2000b; Jolly 2003). Moreover, theorists have also argued that heteronormative assumptions have governed development, too, in cases where it has engaged with issues of sexuality (Bedford 2005; Cornwall and Jolly 2009). This has been apparent in how programmes targeting poverty have been framed around heterosexual married couples and sex relations (*ibid.*). These assumptions mean that fluid and complex non-conforming identities have been excluded from the development agenda and its subsequent benefits, if any (Oosterhoff, Waldman and Olerenshaw 2014).

Additionally, theorists argue that in cases where development has engaged with issues of sexuality it has limited itself to programmes that focus on population control, disease and violence, while failing to incorporate an analysis of non-conforming gender identities and sexualities into its work on poverty reduction (Jolly 2006; Cornwall and Jolly 2009). Development agendas have also been blamed for ignoring sexuality in efforts to reduce poverty, because sexuality is regarded as a luxury and not an immediate cause for concern compared to material needs (Jolly 2010). This negation leaves out the lived experience of poverty that confronts non-conforming individuals. Moreover, it also omits how gender and sexuality-based discrimination can exclude non-conforming individuals from accessing livelihoods.

On the other hand, the literature on poverty has begun to incorporate a multidimensional approach to understanding experiences of poverty. This approach argues for an analysis of the existence of and interplay between economic, social and political dimensions in informing an individual's experience of poverty (Chambers 2005). The adoption of this approach has advanced the debate on incorporating analysis of how non-conforming individuals experience poverty. Jolly (2000b), Armas (2007), Campuzano (2008) and Harcourt (2009) argue for the need to envisage poverty and deprivation in terms of the exclusion experienced by those who identify themselves as being of non-normative gender and sexuality. Through their work, Armas (2007) and Harcourt (2009) establish the need for development programmes to work towards not only understanding these different identities, but also engaging with their experience of multidimensional exclusion and precarity.[8] Jolly (2010) argues that it is imperative to understand the discrimination experienced by individuals with non-normative gender and sexual identities especially in developing countries.

2.3.2 Literature on *Khawaja Siras* in Pakistan

The literature emerging from Pakistan on KS falls broadly into two categories: firstly, anthropological investigations of their gender identity and lives; and secondly, research aimed at understanding their social exclusion and its impact. The literature exploring their gender identity explores the varied nomenclatures within the KS community and brings their experiences to the fore in the context of their customs and rituals (Haider 2008; Pamment 2010; Sultana and Kalyani 2012). These studies expand on how KS enact family life, focusing on rituals surrounding marriage and parenthood.

The other strand of literature investigates different aspects of social exclusion KS experience. Some studies investigate the type of livelihood transgender people pursue in Pakistan, highlighting sex work and begging as key choices (Abdullah *et al.* 2012; Rehan, Chaudhary and Shah 2009; Chaudhry *et al.* 2014). A study by Tabassum and Jamil (2014) explores a different facet, looking at how stigmatisation of KS gender identity can force them to leave school and make them vulnerable to limited employment opportunities. In their work (*ibid.*) they also bring to fore the need for comprehensive policies to ensure that KS have access to education in a safe environment.

The literature establishes the social exclusion of KS and its adverse impacts on their economic life, but it does not provide a nuanced analysis of the multidimensional nature of the exclusion they experience. This is evident in the absence of an exploration of the interrelation between limited social, economic and political opportunities open to KS, and the individual and collective impact of these on their lives. Moreover, these studies have also left out an analysis of gender and sexuality as unified descriptors of an individual's identity.

Furthermore, in one study (Ahmed, Yasin and Umair 2014) the language it uses to describe KS is problematic and discriminatory in itself – the authors refer to KS as 'sexually handicap [*sic.*]' (2014: 2279). This shows the existence of problematic assumptions in the research on KS and their lives. Additionally, there is a lack of information in the literature on the link between the social and economic exclusion of KS and the broader discourse of development programmes. Along with this, the literature also fails to explore the ability of gender identity-based programmes to bring about change in the social and economic exclusion experienced by KS.

This report aims to address the gaps within the literature available in Pakistan by studying the multidimensional social and economic exclusion KS experience and understanding the engagement of a gender identity-based programme with this non-normative gender and sexual identity. It also contributes to the global literature, which identifies the need to direct

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[8] This refers to Butler's conceptualisation of precarity. In her work she defines precarity as 'conditions that threaten life in ways that appear to be outside one's control' and postulates that gender norms directly affect the condition (Butler 2009: i).

investigation towards the multidimensional poverty that non-normative identities experience, while also highlighting the need for development programmes that tackle their lived experience of poverty.

3 Conceptual framework

This section establishes the conceptual framework used in the research.

3.1 Chambers' web of poverty's disadvantage

Multidimensional approaches to poverty moved away from income-based measures and explanations of poverty to focus on the interplay between relational and distributional aspects of poverty. The 'web of poverty's disadvantages' that Chambers describes is one such multidimensional and context-specific approach to poverty. The framework is based on participatory poverty assessments in more than 20 countries, which included over 20,000 poor men and women (Chambers 2005, 2007).

The significance of Chambers' approach stems from its nuanced grasp of the multidimensionality and interrelatedness of different aspects of poverty (Oosterhoff, Waldman and Olerenshaw 2014). This is apparent in how Chambers' work (2005, 2007) highlights that understanding poverty involves an analysis of 12 interacting and mutually reinforcing areas, illustrated in Figure 3.1. These dimensions include: institutions and access; poverty of time; seasonal dimensions; places of the poor; insecurities; physical ill-being; material poverties; social relations; ascribed and legal inferiority; lack of political clout; lack of information; and lack of education/capabilities.

Figure 3.1   Web of poverty's disadvantages
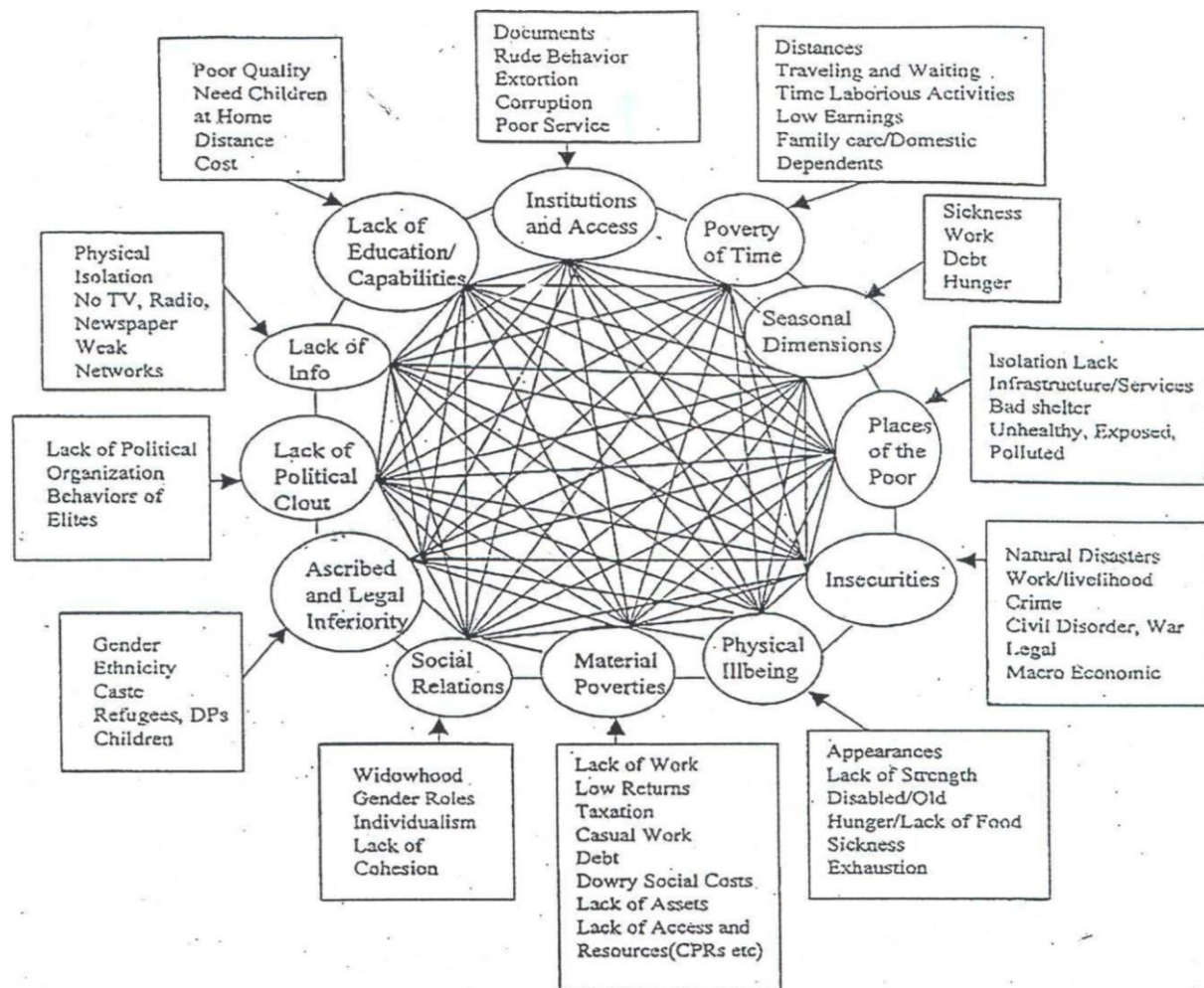
Source: Chambers (2007).

The framework is also ground-breaking in how it incorporates an analysis of the human body. Chambers' argues that the body constitutes many people's most important asset. He argues further that bodies are vulnerable and often weakened by life experiences, and can be extremely exposed (Chambers 2007). Oosterhoff, Waldman and Olerenshaw (2014) highlight that despite this incorporation of the body as a subject of analysis, few analyses have sought to apply Chambers' approach to sexuality. The exceptions to this are Jolly's (2006) adaptation of the framework to issues of sexuality, Campuzano's (2008) exploration of the experiences of Peruvian *travestis*[9] and Leiper's (2009) analysis of the experience of poverty among sex workers in Uganda.

In this report, I draw on Chambers' framework to understand the experiences of KS in Pakistan, and fully explore the meaning of these dimensions in the social and economic exclusion experienced by KS. Moreover, the multidimensional and interlinked nature of this web allows me to establish how the dimensions of WPD mutually reinforce each other to inform experience of exclusion of KS. This allows for a holistic analysis of the exclusion they experience. After establishing an analysis of the interplay between these dimensions, I use the framework to analyse how the KS programme has affected the lived experience of exclusion for the people I interviewed for this study.

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[9] This is the term used for transgender people in Latin America.

4 Methodology

A qualitative approach to the research question and aims has enriched the analysis, because it provides an in-depth understanding of the facets of exclusion and the processes a given development programme triggers (Creswell 2012). In this study, it allowed me to look at respondents' daily lives, with primary research conducted through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This study is an idiographic case study (Levy 2008) that not only provides an in-depth, intensive analysis of the social and economic exclusion KS experience, but also encapsulates the change to exclusion the KS programme has brought.

However, despite the explicit aims of the research, the KS interviewed steered the discussion and ultimately the report. During the interviews, the KS spent the bulk of their time sharing experiences of social and economic exclusion. As the researcher, I concentrated on doing justice to their voices. The focus of the report moved towards narrating and analysing how the KS experience exclusion, while discussing the role of the KS programme to a lesser degree.

I have thereby aimed to carve out a space for academic research on how the non-normative gender and sexual identity of KS informs their experience of poverty. Moreover, I have also examined the change a gender identity-based programme brings to the experience of poverty.

The next section includes information on sampling, data collection and analysis; and also issues and challenges and their mitigation in this research.

4.1 Primary research

4.1.1 Sampling
To conduct this study, I needed to gain access to participants in the KS programme in Lahore. The strategic gatekeeper for the research was the programme manager, who I was introduced to through a personal contact. Given the sensitive nature of the programme, the gatekeeper vetted potential researchers to make sure that they understood the challenges and sensitivities of the research context. Moreover, it was imperative for the gatekeeper to ascertain if researchers were considerate and empathetic to ensure that KS participants were protected from trauma.

I understood these considerations and before pursuing any interaction with the KS directly, I contacted the programme manager and a resource person on the programme (who is a KS). Once they had given me the go-ahead, I began the sampling process, which constituted a snowball sampling method. The programme manager and resource person helped identify the first interviewee, who then recommended the next and so forth.

4.1.2 Data collection and analysis
Over a period of seven days from late June until early July 2015, I conducted seven in-depth semi-structured interviews. The first six interviews were with programme participants, and the seventh with the programme manager. The interviews with the KS helped make sense of how the respondents understood their experience of social and economic exclusion, and the role of the gender identity-based programme in changing that experience. The interview with the programme manager was essential to understanding programme operations.

All the interviews were carried out at the Akhuwat-Fountain House office in Lahore, because the participants felt most comfortable there. I asked interviewees for their consent and only recorded conversations after they had granted permission. I preceded every interview with an explanation of the research project, and assured the interviewees of their anonymity. For this reason, I do not mention participants' names in the report. Each interview was approximately 60 minutes long and was conducted in Urdu and Punjabi. I am proficient in Urdu, Punjabi and English and subsequently translated the interviews into English for analysis.

I initially transcribed the interviews in their entirety, making notes on interesting themes, then revisited the transcriptions to draw out main themes and patterns according to the aims of the study and research questions. By looking for sub-themes, I refined these overarching patterns. In coding the material for this study there was a continuous negotiation between theory and empirics. Throughout the analysis, I used the conceptual framework as a lens to analyse the empirical data.

4.2 Issues and challenges

4.2.1 Trust and familiarity
From the beginning of this research I was mindful that KS are extremely suspicious of people who do not belong to their community, due to the high levels of stigma and discrimination they experience. Therefore, it was imperative for me to establish not only my credibility as a researcher, but also as one who was empathetic. In the first interview I realised that to achieve this, I had to engage in very personal and revealing conversations about my own life. However, personal details were only delved into when KS inquired about my life. To achieve this I used Ann Oakley's concept of 'dynamic' interviewing, entering into 'deep' conversation, allowing the interviewees complete control and participating myself when prompted by the interviewee (May 2011: 148).

4.2.2 Positionality
During the fieldwork, I was mindful of my positionality as a woman from Pakistan continually struggling with her sexuality in a context that sanctions non-heteronormative behaviour. I bore this in mind not only during my fieldwork but throughout the writing process, because I understood that I was not only a rational being but also an emotional one, and therefore needed to pay special attention to maintaining objectivity throughout the research process.

5   Findings and analysis

This section first establishes how KS define their gender identity and sexual orientation. It then goes into greater detail about the KS programme. I have presented these details in the findings section because they emerged during my interviews with the KS and programme manager. The third section explores the findings of the field research with a focus on how KS experience social and economic exclusion. This analysis draws on Chambers framework of WPD, and is followed by a visual overview of the key findings explored through WPD in Figure 5.1. This section maps the experiences KS shared about the programme against the relevant dimensions of WPD. The last section looks at the role the KS programme has played in changing KS' experience of exclusion in relation to social and economic facets of their everyday lives.

5.1   *Khawaja Sira* identity

KS as defined by the respondents include intersex, transgender and transsexual individuals. All the respondents also stated that the term *Khawaja Sira* is one that denotes respect and is accepted by their community as the accurate term for their gender identity and lived experience. In the course of this research, the respondents also mentioned other terms that were not only inaccurate but also gravely disrespectful.[10] With regards to their sexuality, KS consider themselves to be heterosexual because they believe they have a woman's 'soul' – they also refer to themselves with female pronouns – and are attracted to men, who for them are the opposite sex.

5.2   The programme

The KS programme only operates in urban Lahore and works with KS aged 14–50 years. It has been running since 2012. The programme recruits KS through a 'peer-based outreach' approach, which relies on registered KS to introduce more members to the programme. In this way they can reach out to individuals in greatest need, while empowering local members of the KS community to play a more active role in the development of their community. The programme provides KS with: unconditional stipends amounting to 1,200 Pakistani rupees[11] and employment opportunities in the parent organisation of the programme; healthcare facilities with routine medical check-ups and treatment; regular seminars on disease prevention and nutrition; 'psycho-social therapy' to help KS overcome emotional distress, depression, anxiety and other psychological disorders; and organises community dialogues with doctors, university professors and a limited number of business owners to foster dialogue and contribute to mutual understanding and respect between KS and other members of society.

5.3   *Khawaja Siras* and the web of poverty's disadvantages

5.3.1 Institutions and access

KS experience difficulties in engaging with institutions and navigating public and private systems. Because of their non-conforming gender and sexual identity, they often experience stigma, verbal and physical abuse, harassment and discrimination. The main discriminatory institutions the interviewees identified were public hospitals, mosques and the police force.

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[10] These included: *hijra*, *khusra*, *zankha*, *chakka*, *teesri dunya* and *teesri makhlook*.
[11] 1 GBP = 160 PKR.

Harassment characterises their experience of health institutions, which leaves KS fearing for their safety. According to one interviewee, who is a social activist:

> *There is no respect for us in hospitals. The hospital staff and doctors harass us. They pull at our clothes and push us around. If you answer back then they become vengeful and we get scared that we might be attacked.*
> Interview 4

Apart from harassment, KS are also subjected to complete denial of services. An HIV-positive interviewee said, 'When I became ill I went to the local government hospital. The staff and doctors were very inconsiderate and I was denied services and wasn't even given a bed to lie on in the emergency ward' (Interview 5).

Religion plays an important part in the lives of KS and all of the interviewees said that they adhered to all religious regulations. However, religious institutions and actors exclude KS from mosques, infringing on their right to participate in religious rituals and practices they value. They explained how their visible gender identity – 'looking like a man and a woman at the same time' (Interview 3) – makes it difficult to visit mosques to pray, and how they need to compromise their gender identity to do so.

Despite adhering to these regulations and curtailing their gender performance,[12] KS may be harassed if anyone points them out. 'The policemen start hitting us. Sometimes they shame us by pushing us to the side and make us stand in the corner. We crave space but they don't give us space' (Interview 1). Continuing this conversation, the interviewee also said that KS do not even have access to an imam for their funeral prayers and rites: 'Even our death is ostracised. We are told to conduct our funeral processions [at] night not in the day. No one comes to carry our dead body. The imam refuses to read our funeral prayers' (Interview 1).

Transsexual KS are shunned entirely from religious institutions and practices. A transsexual interviewee said: 'I can't enter the mosque because I [had been operated on] and now the religion considers me to be *napak* [lit. unclean] and unfit to enter the mosque' (Interview 6).

The police force is another institution where discriminatory and hostile attitudes leave KS insecure and subject to humiliation. According to an interviewee, 'the police have harassed me a lot. They would say things like "Come on, take off your clothes. Why are you being shy? We know you sell your body for sex, why not to us?"' (Interview 5).

5.3.2 Poverty of time

Poverty of time arises from the time KS spend navigating between masculine and feminine identities, which is a great social burden, as well as the irregular hours they spend in dance work.[13] Interviewees explained that the time they spend preparing a socially acceptable identity is not what is most inconvenient rather it is the thought process involved in planning interactions with other people. They need to constantly pay attention to how they are dressed and if it will attract any undue attention. 'It takes me ten minutes to dress as a woman and ten minutes to dress as a man. But the problem is the time spent thinking and planning our dressing so that it is according to what society can digest' (Interview 1).

The KS also explained how they had no time to themselves while they were employed in dance work. 'Dance work always took up a lot of time. There was no routine to life and no

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[12] Butler's conceptualisation of performativity which stipulates that performativity of gender is a stylized repetition of acts, an imitation or miming of the dominant conventions of gender (Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge).
[13] Dance work refers to KS dancing at private functions and sex work. This is a term preferred by the KS interviewees for their profession.

time to pay attention to myself and for what? A profession in which I was never content' (Interview 4).

5.3.3 Seasonal dimensions

Seasonality affects the quality of life of KS with regards to their housing and employment. In the case of housing, those living in tents suffer the most: 'KS living in tents have to bear the harsh summer sun and the brutal winter cold without any form of protection' (Interview 6). Those engaged in begging have to do so in extreme weathers: 'We have to go out begging to earn the food to put in our belly even if the temperature is hot enough to melt us or cold enough to freeze us' (Interview 5). Moreover, KS involved in dance work are left unemployed in the Islamic calendar months of Ramadan and Muharram, because all dance work is suspended in these months out of religious respect and heightened state security. These dimensions make them susceptible to income shocks, as well as impinging on their health.

5.3.4 Places of the poor

KS have to live in ghettos in Lahore, because they can only access housing in certain areas where landlords are willing to rent to them. Moreover, due to the social stigma they are also ostracised within their own families and unable to access family property and resources. All the research interviewees said that they lived in their family homes when they were young, but were forced to move out during puberty or ran away because of physical, emotional and verbal abuse. With minimal resources, as mentioned previously, some ended up living in tents, while others were able to rent in ghettos. Apart from having to live in houses that are unfit for habitation they also have to bear the hostile attitudes of other residents in the area and the continual harassment by landlords. This hostility manifests itself to a greater degree if there is only one KS household in the community: 'sometimes when people know it is just one house, they rob our houses and burn down our houses' (Interview 6).

Apart from housing, KS must also work in unsafe conditions with no regard for their well-being. While begging they not only endure harsh weather but also insecurity on roads, with people running them over in vehicles and hurling abuse at them (Interviews 4, 5 and 6). For dance work, they have to work in unsafe and hostile locations where clients and dance function organisers abuse them.

5.3.5 Insecurities

The descriptions of insecurities related to their daily lives in public spaces, workplaces and housing situations. Firstly, extreme social stigma and harassment characterise their interactions in public spaces. Some of the respondents said that they have to dress in neutral colours and not wear make-up to ensure that they do not attract undue attention, which could result in harassment (Interviews 1, 3 and 5). Deeply entrenched in the KS psyche is the constant fear for their lives, because they feel that if they were killed the media would not report on it. According to one interviewee, 'when we leave the house we tie a *kaffan* [shroud] on our head because you never know when we might get killed. And I know that if we get killed no one will ask [why] or wonder or cry' (Interview 1).

Moreover, KS assert that they need to keep quiet in most situations to ensure that they are not harassed. According to one interviewee, 'when I am travelling on the public bus service I am pushed around and harassed, but I remain quiet because I know that if I retaliate the abuse would heighten and I would be beaten up' (Interview 4). All the interviewees said that they were afraid to take collective action and speak up for their rights because they felt that it would not only make the abuse worse, but also make their lives more insecure.

Secondly, KS also experience insecurity at work because employers threaten them if they try to leave. One interviewee said that 'people from my previous work keep calling me and harassing me and I worry for my life' (Interview 6). In this regard, the programme has

alleviated the risks and vulnerabilities KS experience. One interviewee said: 'Now, I feel so safe and secure as I know I will come to office, do my work and go home and no one will beat me up' (Interview 6).

Lastly, in their housing situations KS experience constant fear of being robbed and losing property, as discussed in section 5.3.4, 'Places of the poor'.

5.3.6 Physical ill-being

Interviewees did not disclose much information in relation to their sexual health – only one disclosed her HIV-positive status. However, they mentioned how exposure to extreme weather conditions and denial of health services make them more susceptible to long-term health problems. Moreover, one interviewee (Interview 6) mentioned how her history of begging for long hours in harsh summers has left her physically weaker, and now she cannot bear the heat anymore. She also added that this affects her daily life, because in the summer she has to rest a lot to be able to cope with the weather, which does not allow her to work as much as she wants, and leads her to compromise on her earnings.

The KS programme has helped address the health concerns of KS. One interviewee said, 'I suffer from hypertension and I used to get very unwell as I had no access to doctors or medication. The programme has helped a lot in this regard through the regular check-ups and medication' (Interview 2).

5.3.7 Material poverties

Interviewees lamented that their visible gender identity and lack of education limited their livelihood opportunities to dance work and begging. These opportunities do not cater to their basic needs and leave them impoverished. Along with limited livelihood opportunities, KS are also not supported by their families due to high levels of stigma. Families do not give them their share of inheritances and force them to move out of the family home. According to one interviewee:

> *My father was very cruel towards me and once he charged at me and slit the side of my neck with a knife and then he threw me out of the house. I had nowhere to go and no money. He does not even want to give me a share in his property even though he has given my other siblings their share.*
> Interview 1

5.3.8 Social relations

KS experience social relations on three levels. The first is their relationship with their biological family. As discussed above, their families ostracise them and force them to leave their homes. KS therefore create surrogate families with other KS as a support network. They view their family structure through the lens of heteronormativity. Interviewee 1 explained that KS have the same familial relations that are found in 'normal households': 'the same way you have a mother and father and then have siblings'. She explained how she has a *guru maa*[14] and 'siblings' who are other KS *chehlas*[15] with the same *guru* as her.

The second level is social relations with wider society – in their words 'non-KS' individuals. Stigma-fuelled violence and abuse characterise these relations. The last level is relationships of love. Interviewees said that they are disappointed in love because they continually experience a lack of honest and loving companionship, their male partners using them for

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[14] KS are tied in *guru–chehla* relationships, which would translate as teacher–disciple relationships. Most KS are abandoned by their families or forced to move out of the family home, or run away because of physical and emotional abuse. In such cases, they approach other KS, living together as family, where the *guru* heads the household and has many *chehlas* living with him/her. In this case, Interviewee 1 is the *chehla* of her *guru maa*.
[15] See note 14.

sex and money. According to one interviewee: 'Men attach themselves to us to eat away our resources, not to support us or care for us' (Interview 5).

The interviewees said that the programme has alleviated the isolation they have experienced in the aforementioned problematic social relations. As one said:

> *I define poverty as the extreme loneliness you feel when you know that, no one out there loves you and the world is disgusted by you. I used to feel extremely alone and betrayed before coming here. However, my engagement with this programme and its staff has helped me create these new familial relations.*
> Interview 4

5.3.9 Ascribed and legal inferiority

Despite reconfiguration of legislation for KS[16] to recognise them as citizens and safeguard their rights, there has not been any tangible and significant shift to secure the lives of the KS or provide them with employment opportunities. Additionally, their legal inferiority is also apparent in the criminalisation of non-heteronormative sexualities under the Pakistan Penal Code.[17] Interviewees highlighted that laws to protect them from harassment and abuse have either not been drafted or implemented.

> *The court's CNIC [Computerised National Identity Card] decision has not helped in any way. It has been a blunt instrument since there hasn't been a change in laws to protect the rights of KS; for example, what about when we are harassed and abused because we are KS? Who answers then?*
> Interview 3

The lack of integration of KS and their perpetual exclusion is not only apparent in how they do not tangibly benefit from the law, but also in how society shuns them. Given their lack of familial protection or extended social networks, and the absence of legal sanctions for abuse against KS, they suffer at the hands of a discriminatory society. They are treated as sexual objects and shunned from society. As one interviewee said:

> *No matter what, people will not stop cursing us. People think we are just a machine for sexual relations. They think we are just there to have sex with and people think screw them, give them [KS] some money and throw them away.*
> Interview 1

5.3.10 Lack of political clout

Given their legal and ascribed inferiority, KS have weak political influence in their communities, and for them this is apparent in how political parties do not reach out to KS as potential voters. The most recent general election in Pakistan took place in 2013 and interviewees were asked whether political parties or their leaders had approached them. One responded said, 'political parties and leaders do not care about us and have never approached us to convince us to vote for them, we do not exist for them and they will never bother' (Interview 6). Moreover, all the interviewees said that they would never consider standing for election, because they would only be ridiculed.

Furthermore, they were also reluctant to organise for their rights because they believed that stigma made them more susceptible to abuse and harassment by the general public and state authorities. As one interviewee said, 'We can only come together to advocate for our

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[16] Details in Section 2.
[17] Refer to note 5.

rights if someone helps us and protects us under their banner. If four or five KS come together the police will beat us but no one will care' (Interview 4).

5.3.11 Lack of information

It was apparent from all the conversations with the interviewees that they were unaware of their rights as citizens and the legal provisions that protect or criminalise them. All the respondents said that they were unaware which laws could protect them. They emphasised that they steered clear of police stations and courts because they lacked this information. Moreover, when asked about the criminalisation of non-heteronormative sexual orientations, all the respondents claimed they had never heard of the law and were unaware that it could be used against them. A lack of information was also apparent in their understanding of different health issues and the need for regular screenings for sexually transmitted diseases.

5.3.12 Lack of education/capabilities

When I began my interviews, the first respondent told me in the first five minutes of our conversation 'if you interview ten of us or a thousand you will hear the same stories – the same stories of abuse and torture from families and the world' (Interview 1). This was especially true of interviewees' experience of educational institutes. Abuse coloured their stories; for some, it was from their peers, for others teachers or passers-by as they made their way to school. All the respondents left education at one point or other because they could not constantly battle the abuse and discrimination they experienced. According to one interviewee:

> The boys at school used to bully me a lot. However, the last straw for me was when I was raped by my teacher in grade 9. The shame and pain of this was like the last nail in the coffin of my education.
> Interview 1

5.4 Identifying synergies and interconnections

This section aims to draw out how the different dimensions of KS' WPD are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and how they inform the social and economic exclusion KS experience. It includes the connections presented in the previous section. However, it is not exhaustive given the numerous possibilities and the constraint of the length of this report.

Social and economic exclusion crystallise over the lifetimes of KS. Their non-conforming identity affects their lives from the very beginning. Therefore, to trace KS' experience it is imperative to examine WPD's interlocking dimensions through the course of their lives. As children, growing up they experience ridicule, discrimination and stigma at family and societal levels. Their lives in both arenas are informed by perceptions of **ascribed inferiority**, which lead them to be regarded as sexual objects and susceptible to continual discrimination and violent abuse.

Their continual othering puts them on the margins of society and spills over into other facets of their lives, dictating social interactions in every space. Coupled with this ascribed inferiority is their **legal inferiority**, which not only criminalises non-heteronormative sexualities, but also fails to place any tangible sanctions on discrimination and harassment against them. Consequently, social perceptions and attitudes are unchecked, because the law and social norms do not define and implement sanctions against those who stigmatise, abuse and exclude KS.

With the backdrop of these reinforcing inferiorities, KS suffer in their **social relations**, experiencing unwarranted abuse, discrimination and isolation. Societal attitudes and discourses seep into KS' biological homes, obliterating family support systems and forcing them into lives of isolation. The constant ridicule family members experience in society

because of having a KS child leads to undue aggression towards KS. Being ejected from the family home deprives KS of safety nets and the protection of the family. It also subjects them to increased **material poverties** for the reasons described in section 5.3.7 and thereby creates **places of the poor** as they are forced to live in tents or ghettos.

This highlights how lack of familial support can push KS into scenarios that further marginalise them. Ascribed inferiority again plays a role because of the discriminatory perceptions about KS' identity, with landlords and tenants in residential spaces continually harassing and intimidating them. Moreover, that some KS are forced to live in tents because few landlords are willing to rent to them also reflects how societal attitudes affect their lives and exclude KS from safe and discrimination-free living spaces.

The interviewees asserted that they needed to keep quiet in most situations to ensure that they were not harassed. KS internalise the detrimental attitudes of social actors as excessive psychological fear that impinges on the quality of their life. It reflects the dimension of **insecurities**, their social relations governed by conservative and dogmatic social norms.

Furthermore, due to troubling societal attitudes KS cannot get an **education** due to continuous bullying and sexual and physical abuse at the hands of teachers, school administration and peers. This lack of education limits KS' livelihood opportunities, and contributes to the three dimensions of material **poverties** and subsequent **physical ill-being** and insecurities. Firstly, **material poverties** occur because their lack of education – coupled with identity-based discrimination – limits their livelihood opportunities to dance work and begging, by which they earn a nominal income. Secondly, physical ill-being is linked with these livelihood opportunities; begging, for example, exposes KS to harsh weather and makes them susceptible to long-term health problems. Thirdly, the sites of these livelihood opportunities make KS highly vulnerable, as described in section 5.3.4, Places of the poor.

Moreover, in this context it is also imperative to place religious prescriptions within the social norms and attitudes that contribute to the ascribed inferiority of KS. Actors in religious spaces and institutions, such as mosques carry out these prescriptions, which denies KS the opportunity to practise religion the way they want and imposes undue regulation over their bodies. The state and its laws do not intervene to safeguard these rights for KS, and this in turn gives more power to social actors such as *imams* and worshippers at mosques – mostly men – who reprimand KS with religious sanctions codified in their interpretation of religion.

Furthermore, social norms embedded in interpretations of religion also dictate the sexual lives of KS, extending the regulation of their bodies. During the interviews, I asked all the KS if they were in love or had any plans to settle down. Their instant responses were of shock saying 'this is not right' and 'this is not allowed'. I probed further to uncover why they thought this was wrong and discovered that interviewees did not believe that they had the right to love and marriage. However, they felt there was no way for them to express this, because the social and religious conservatism present in the country would put them in danger if they began demanding their 'right to love and to be loved' (Interview 1).

The WPD framework helps us examine how the KS' experience of social and economic exclusion is interlinked, and how elements that contribute to create their social inferiority also affect their ability to earn through livelihood opportunities free from abuse and discrimination. Moreover, understanding the interconnections present in the WPD framework also helps in gauging the impact of how economic exclusion in the form of low incomes from high-risk livelihoods seeps into the everyday life of KS by impinging on their health and increasing their insecurities.

Given these interlocking dimensions it is apparent that social and economic exclusion occur simultaneously for KS. However, the web also highlights how the ascribed and legal inferiority of KS maintains a central position in informing other dimensions. The lack of social

and legal sanctions for subjecting KS to discrimination and abuse places more power in the hands of various actors who in a way have free rein in dictating the lives of KS.

5.5   Are we there yet?

This section looks at changes that the gender identity-based programme has brought to this experience of KS exclusion.

The KS programme aims to alleviate KS' immediate material poverties by providing them with sustainable and discrimination-free livelihood opportunities. These opportunities have not only provided KS with a steady flow of income but have also contributed to assuage the vulnerability they experienced in begging and dance work. Moreover, the opportunity of a scheduled seven-hour work day has also helped overcome the poverty of time experienced by those KS who were employed in dance work.

At the same time the employment opportunities that Akhuwat-Fountain House has provided through the programme have also targeted the conditions that impinged on KS' physical health – they no longer beg on roadsides in all weathers – and has provided them with regular diagnostic care, which helps them manage current health problems. Seminars on various health conditions inform KS about preventive care, helping to curtail and alleviate physical ill-being.

Additionally, WPD brought to fore how KS experience a sense of isolation due to problematic social relations. The programme has done this by providing them with a 'familial environment' where they feel 'respected' and 'listened to'. This has immense importance for these non-conforming individuals, because previously they were limited to interacting with members of their own community only, while any interaction with 'non-KS' individuals was characterised by abuse and therefore avoided. However, now they have an avenue that allows them to feel safe in interacting with people who do not belong to their community. Additionally, the programme has fostered a dialogue between KS and wider society. This has been a starting point for the programme to initiate a conversation about KS identity and the problems these non-conforming individuals face.

Despite the changes the programme has brought to KS' lives, some dimensions have been missed out. The analysis through WPD has highlighted how ascribed and legal inferiority percolates into all the facets of KS' lives, forcing them to live on the margins of society. These identifications have also revealed how the programme falls short in its effort to cater to the multi-faceted experience of social and economic exclusion KS face. The programme has a somewhat myopic view, because it focuses on immediate material poverties, health concerns and limited dialogue between KS and 'non-KS' individuals, while missing out issues and discrimination that prevail due to the ascribed and legal inferiority of KS.

Through its efforts to establish a dialogue between KS and the wider community to address problematic social attitudes, the programme may have partially targeted KS' experience of ascribed inferiority. However, its initiatives do not address other aspects of ascribed inferiority. This is evident in how the programme has no outreach efforts aimed at creating employment opportunities for KS beyond the parent organisation. The lack of engagement with employers beyond this organisation allows for the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes that previously limited KS livelihood opportunities to begging and dance work.

A focus on creating jobs within the parent organisation might not be sustainable in the future as the programme grows in terms of the number of KS participants. Moreover, it limits KS' livelihood opportunities to what the organisation has to offer. It misses the true goal of reintegrating KS into society when KS are unable to tap into the complete basket of economic and social resources available. The programme also misses out other imperative dimensions, such as education, that would improve KS' livelihood prospects. There have not

been any initiatives to ensure KS access to education or create an educational programme within the organisation that caters to their educational needs.
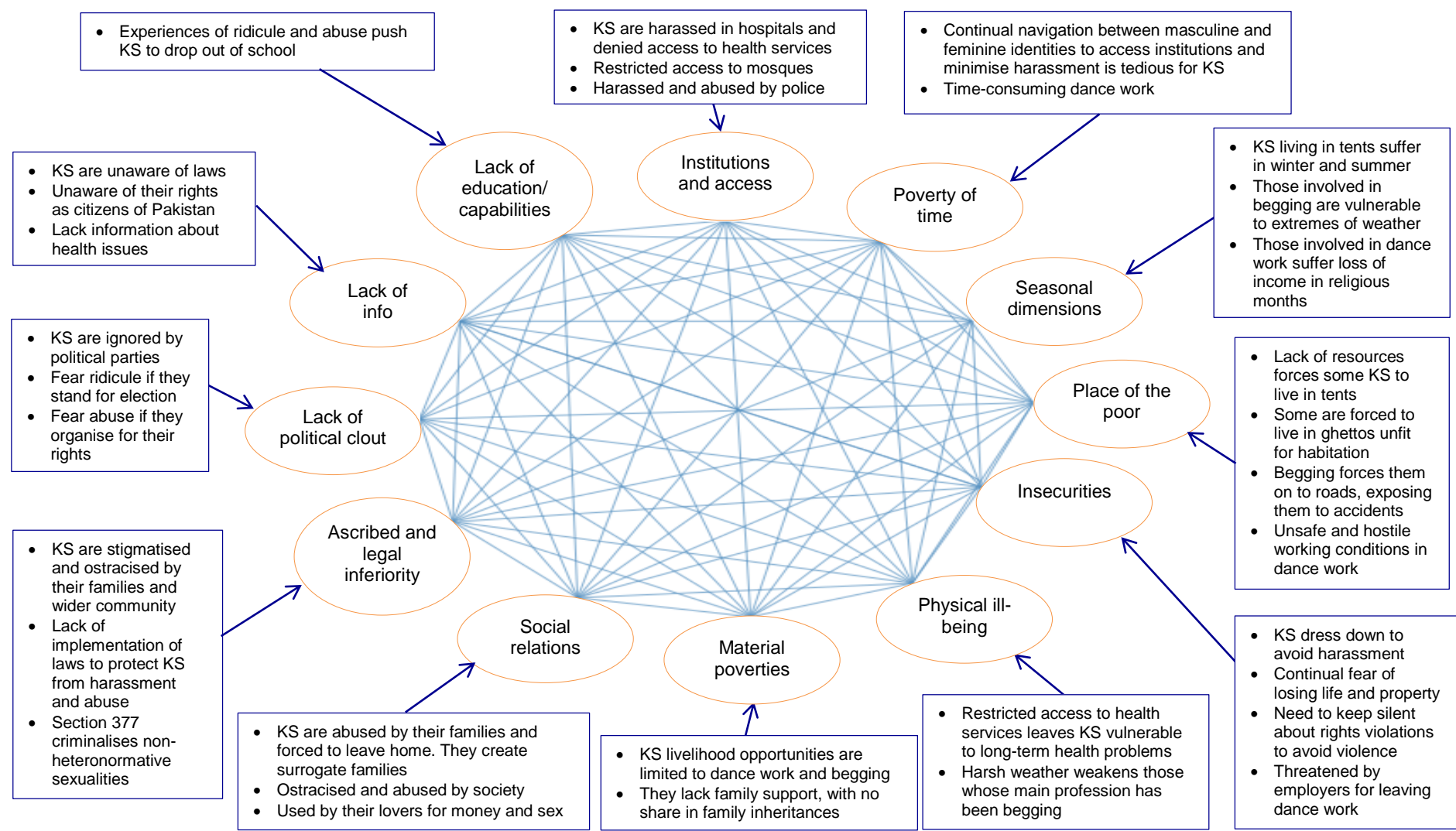
Additionally, the programme fails to engage with the actors with greatest influence in the daily lives of KS who contribute to their experience of exclusion. For example, the exclusion of KS from safe residential areas is an issue that the programme has omitted. Even if the KS spend their workday in a safe environment, they return to homes that are in locations of unbridled discrimination and violence.

Besides this, the programme does not focus on the legal inferiority KS experience. There have not been any advocacy initiatives supporting KS to help them organise and lobby the repeal of Section 377 or begin dialogue about their sexual rights. Moreover, the programme does not conduct any lobbying efforts to ensure the formulation and implementation of laws that protect KS from discrimination and identity-based crimes. The lack of such efforts where daily actors in KS' lives are not engaged with perpetuates factors that have deeply entrenched fear in the minds of KS.

The programme does not, or perhaps cannot, adopt a holistic view of the social and economic exclusion KS experience and this is evident through an analysis using WPD. This is not to say that the programme is not fruitful and extremely important. It needs to be appreciated that the programme is working in a highly contested context where dogmatic religious views, conservatism and heteronormative supremacy are at play. The programme has for the time being alleviated some of the perils KS experience by providing them with a working environment free from discrimination and abuse, access to health care and a safety net in the absence of familial relations. However, it is evident that without changing discriminatory social attitudes, which form the predominant narrative, the holistic alleviation of the social and economic exclusion might not be possible.

Accordingly, without a focus on the lack of social and legal sanctions to hold to account those who perpetuate discrimination, harassment, stigma and abuse against KS, addressing their experience of social and economic exclusion is not possible. Therefore, it is imperative for the programme to adopt a long-term strategy to bring about these changes at the societal level and to transform the prevailing dominant social discourses that marginalise and ostracise KS.

Figure 5.1 *Khawaja Siras'* web of poverty's disadvantages

- Experiences of ridicule and abuse push KS to drop out of school

- KS are harassed in hospitals and denied access to health services
- Restricted access to mosques
- Harassed and abused by police

- Continual navigation between masculine and feminine identities to access institutions and minimise harassment is tedious for KS
- Time-consuming dance work

- KS are unaware of laws
- Unaware of their rights as citizens of Pakistan
- Lack information about health issues

- KS living in tents suffer in winter and summer
- Those involved in begging are vulnerable to extremes of weather
- Those involved in dance work suffer loss of income in religious months

- KS are ignored by political parties
- Fear ridicule if they stand for election
- Fear abuse if they organise for their rights

- Lack of resources forces some KS to live in tents
- Some are forced to live in ghettos unfit for habitation
- Begging forces them on to roads, exposing them to accidents
- Unsafe and hostile working conditions in dance work

- KS are stigmatised and ostracised by their families and wider community
- Lack of implementation of laws to protect KS from harassment and abuse
- Section 377 criminalises non-heteronormative sexualities

- KS are abused by their families and forced to leave home. They create surrogate families
- Ostracised and abused by society
- Used by their lovers for money and sex

- KS livelihood opportunities are limited to dance work and begging
- They lack family support, with no share in family inheritances

- Restricted access to health services leaves KS vulnerable to long-term health problems
- Harsh weather weakens those whose main profession has been begging

- KS dress down to avoid harassment
- Continual fear of losing life and property
- Need to keep silent about rights violations to avoid violence
- Threatened by employers for leaving dance work

Lack of education/ capabilities

Institutions and access

Poverty of time

Seasonal dimensions

Lack of info

Place of the poor

Lack of political clout

Insecurities

Ascribed and legal inferiority

Physical ill-being

Social relations

Material poverties

Source: Author's own, based on Chambers' (2007) WPD.

6   Conclusion

The study set out to explore how a gender identity-based programme has brought about changes in the everyday social and economic lives of KS. The first aim of the research was to investigate the links between KS' non-conforming identity and their experience of social and economic exclusion. The second aim was to analyse the role of the gender identity-based programme in bringing about change in KS' experience of exclusion. I set out to do this aware that without a holistic analysis of KS' experience of exclusion it would be difficult to evaluate the role the KS programme has played in changing their lives. However, the report focuses more on the KS' experience of exclusion, and the value they place on it as a shared experience.

I used Chambers' WPD framework for the study because its conceptualisation of poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon allows for a nuanced analysis of how individuals can experience exclusion in various dimensions simultaneously. Moreover, it also brings to fore how these dimensions are not separate, but rather are interactive and mutually reinforcing.

Through this conceptual lens and in accordance with the two main aims, the study achieved two primary insights: firstly, KS experience social and economic exclusion simultaneously and their ascribed and legal inferiority has a central position in informing their experience of exclusion in other dimensions; secondly, the KS programme has missed out a holistic analysis of the exclusion KS experience and has not addressed their main exclusionary dimension of ascribed and legal inferiority.

This study's findings, through its investigation of its primary question and subsequent research aims, contribute to the local context literature on KS in Pakistan, while also contributing to the global literature on the connections between gender and sexuality and experiences of poverty. The general literature on this subject, specifically in the context of Pakistani KS, is inconclusive on the vital questions regarding a holistic view of their experience of exclusion and the ability of development programmes to tackle it.

This research contributes to filling this gap by providing a nuanced analysis of how KS experience exclusion in the social and economic facets of their lives. Moreover, it establishes how these dimensions of exclusion are interlinked and mutually reinforcing by tracing how ascribed and legal inferiority associated with the KS identity impinges on their access to livelihoods, physical health, living conditions, education, family support systems and sense of security.

Moreover, the global literature building linkages between non-conforming gender and sexual identities and their experience of poverty highlights the heteronormative assumptions that dominate development practices, policies and programmes (Bedford 2005; Cornwall and Jolly 2009). These assumptions are apparent in how development through its programmes interacts with married couples and heterosexual sexual relations (*ibid.*). This leads to non-conforming individuals becoming invisible in development practice. Based on this, theorists argue for the need to understand the lived experience of exclusions non-conforming individuals suffer, to call out development's heteronormative presumptions. The study has contributed to this literature by researching the lived experience of exclusion that confronts KS in their daily lives, and has gone further, also identifying the interplay between different dimensions that subject them to this exclusion.

However, the study is geographically and programmatically limited because it only analyses the experiences of KS who were participating in the KS programme in Lahore. Therefore, the findings of the report have been confined to the experiences of these KS. Despite, these limitations, it is possible to draw conclusions that not only inform the KS programme's design

but also the wider literature on the lived experience of exclusion of non-conforming individuals. This research brings to fore how the programme in its long-term strategy should incorporate a multidimensional analysis of the exclusion KS experience and not only focus on working towards transforming societal attitudes that discriminate against KS, but also lobby to re-configure laws that sanction discrimination and abuse against KS to help bring about change in their lives.

Despite this, it is imperative to reiterate that this programme operates in a highly contested and heteronormative society in Pakistan and that the work it is doing with KS is highly commendable. It has given them way to feel safe and secure, which all the interviewees in this study appreciate. Therefore, it is imperative to bear in mind that not only is the programme a positive addition to KS' lives but it can, if it chooses to grow in the way this study identifies, possibly make long-term impacts on the way the heteronormative society of Pakistan conceptualises gender and sexual minorities.

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