

**IDENTITY FORMATION IN YOUNG GAY
MEN: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY**



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INQUIRY**



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BY

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All changes suggested by examiners during defense are incorporated in this final copy.



Signature of Student

13th June 2023

Dated



Signature of Supervisor

13th June 2023

Dated



Signature of HOD

Dated

RESEARCH COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

It is certified that Ms. Ayesha Rai of BSc (Hons) Applied Psychology (session 2019 – 2023), Department of Applied Psychology has carried out research work entitled “**Identity Formation in Young Gay Men: a Narrative Inquiry**” under my supervision.

It is assured that research work is original and has not yet been published anywhere else.



Signature of Supervisor

Designation

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Zara Haroon', located in the bottom right corner of the page.

ABSTRACT

Sexual minorities in Pakistan are largely ignored in research fields. This study aimed to fill this gap by focusing on the narratives of young gay men in Pakistan regarding their identity formation. Qualitative research design and narrative research paradigms were adopted to maintain the integrity of the participants' own voice. For this purpose, snowball sampling was conducted in Lahore, Pakistan and in depth, unstructured interviews were taken from the four participants. The resulting data was analyzed using thematic narrative analysis and yielded the themes of (a) initial development of identity (sexual assault, gender identity crisis, religious identity crisis, queer trauma), (b) societal implications on identity (sexism, the heteronormative default, sexual and romantic challenges, western queerness) and (c) recognition and integration of identity (I contain multitudes) regarding the identity formation of the young gay men. All these factors and experiences played into their sense of self and the narratives they provided regarding their identity formation. Identity formation is a tumultuous journey for all youths but this is made more difficult for young gay men because of the lack of social support systems in the community. Social awareness and education can provide aid in this regard. More research is required in this aspect for sexual minorities in Pakistan for ignoring someone's existence does not make them vanish.

Keywords: narrative, sexual assault, social support, gender, religion

IDENTITY FORMATION IN YOUNG GAY MEN: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The development of identity is a rather complex process for any youth. The process of finding who you are and where you fit into your society can be overwhelming. Similarly, the phenomenon of a gay man's development of his own sexual and personal identity is complicated and often times, difficult. This may be accountable to multiple reasons. For example, unlike other minority members, gay men are not usually brought up in an environment with supporting members who reinforce and reward their identity. Because the development of sexual identity is a process for which gay men have largely been left to their own devices, unprepared and contextually often stigmatized, it appears that hence, this processes would be characterized by incongruences in its cognitive, behavioral as well affective components, which in turn would create tension between the real self and the portrayed self. The major trend in psychological theories maintains that individuals seek congruence between these components of identity for the elevation of tension. (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, Devos & Banaji, 2003; Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999).

The APA dictionary of psychology (2022) defines gay as a denoting term for individuals especially men that are romantically and sexually interested in members of the same sex. WHO (2014) defines youth as people belonging to the age range of 15-24 years old. A man is a person that can be legally defined as someone that is born as a biological male. APA defines identity as an individual's sense of self defined by (a) a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly shared with any other person and (b) a span of associations as well as social responsibilities and roles. This definition provides two components that rule the individual's own sense of self-worth: the personal and the social. How all the variables discussed interact, transform and affect each of

this domain and how it in turn, affects the individual as a whole, is the topic of the proposed research at hand.

The Cass identity model is a major framework for the development of LGBT identities. This was one of the first models that recognized gay and other queer individuals as “normal” in predominately heterosexual societies. Cass, described six stages of identity formation that queer individuals may go through in their life. The first stage is characterized by identity confusion whereby the individual is in denial regarding their true self. Next identity comparison where queer individuals compare themselves to heterosexual individuals in society and begin to formulate how they, themselves differ in this regard. Identity tolerance is the next stage where queer people begin to accept themselves and come to the realization that they are not alone. Identity acceptance is characterized by the statement “I will be okay” whereby LGBT people begin the process of self-acceptance. Identity pride is where individuals find their community and take pride in their status as a sexual minority and lastly, identity synthesis is when individuals synthesize the sexual aspect of their personality in their overall personality and it becomes an aspect of it much like nationality or gender (Cass, 1979).

Once in deep conversation with a gay friend, he disclosed that he used to think he was a woman. Because that’s what he had been told. That only women are attracted to men. So that criterion automatically labelled him as a woman. This confusion in identity that the heteronormative society and culture create, is hence a point that is both sensitive and crucial. Concepts such as “masculinity” “being a man”, “not being sissy” are few examples of the toxicity of this system. A man is not able to cry openly for the fear of being labelled “feminine” or “sensitive” (Salam, 2021). Being called gay then, in such a society is a deep abuse. How this system impacts an actual gay man’s sense of worth, his relationship with

others and himself and especially how he discovers and maintains his identity is a very important and significant discussion and research that needs to be done.

Animals across more than four hundred and fifty species worldwide display homosexuality as well as other queer behavior. Where does the contempt and prejudice against the gay community spring from then in societies such as Pakistan? This may be attributed to the religious affiliations as well as interpretations of the country as Pakistan is a majorly Muslim state. Homosexual and other queer acts are forbidden in traditional Islamic jurisprudence and are liable to different punishments, including stoning and the death penalty, depending on the situation and legal school. (Fereydooni, 2010).

The gay community is not something that is openly discussed in the deeply religious, conservative society of Pakistan. The standard Pakistani climate regarding its treatment of sexual minorities is extremely hostile. A person who comes forward as publicly homosexual will not only risk isolation and backlash from their family, but they may also be subjugated to violence as well as possible legal problems (Landinfo, 2013). Forbes newspaper describes Pakistan as the 14th worst country in the world for queer people. Fergusson, a BBC news reporter states that “LGBTQ+ issues are not typically at the forefront of Pakistan’s political agenda.” This is due to the deep-rooted religious intolerance present in Pakistan. Pakistan is also a deeply patriarchal society. Which obviously affects women but also men (Bloom, 2019).

The implications of the *Queer Theory* as an interpretative framework must also be acknowledged. The process of identity formation in the young gay community is in direct line with the framework of the theory as it aims to explore the oppressive power of dominant norms, particularly those relating to heterosexuality, and the immiseration they cause to those who cannot, or do not wish to, live according to those norms. This is the main reason behind

the threats to identity faced by gay men generally the prejudice and harassment against the sexual minorities (Minton, 1997). Socially established norms and dualistic categories with a special focus on challenging sexual (heterosexual/homosexual), gender (male/female) as well as class (rich/poor), classifications are aimed to be brought into discussion in the study.

The study is also aimed to be built on the foundation of *Identity Process Theory*. The theory proposes that an individual's adjustment can be conceptualized as involving the three processes of identity assimilation (maintaining self-consistency), identity accommodation (making changes in the self), and identity balance (maintaining a sense of self but changing when necessary) (Jaspal, Breakwell, 2014). As this study aims to dive deep into the identities of young gay men, this theory is of the utmost regard.

Although in recent times the acceptance and the voicing of concerns as well as the research and article advancement on minorities in Pakistan has increased dramatically, this still does not begin to cover the sexual minorities as they for the most part, are still being ignored. This is a worrying fact and this research aims to highlight and hopefully correct this gap.

Gay men or any member of the queer community is not only not legally or formally recognized by the state, the Pakistan Penal Code states, "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than two years nor more than ten years, and shall also be liable to fine." Hence the state and law of Pakistan not only vilifies the existence of gay community but also criminalizes them.

The acceptance and stigma around the gay community has improved significantly in the past years due to the internet and social media exposure as well as the feats all over the

world regarding queer communities such as the legalization of gay marriage in many countries. Pakistan's neighbor India, is largely better in its treatment of its sexual minorities, legalizing gay marriage in 2018. It is astounding because the countries are extremely similar in their culture and history. But India is secular state while Pakistan is a Muslim one. This seems to be the turning point. Many organizations and NGOs such as the Human Dignity Trust Pakistan, are working on destigmatizing and erasing the prejudices against the queer population, there is still a very long road to go through. The gay community, themselves are not very hopeful on the betterment of their treatment but we must keep working and moving forward. This research aims to correct this literature gap.

1.1 RATIONALE

The time period of youth is characterized by many changes and transformations. It is also a period for the formation and recognition of one's identity. Sexual identity is a major aspect of the development of an individual's overall sense of self. How do sexual minorities, specifically, gay men form their identity and how the backdrop of Pakistani society plays a role in this regard is the major point of analysis of the proposed research. The main focus for this study is to gain a thorough understanding of how young gay men living in Pakistan form their identity. What social and cultural factors contribute to it. The dilemmas and challenges faced by the community in the formation and protection of their identity and the support systems and coping strategies they have. Although much researcher attention has been given to the identity formation and social problems of LGBTQ+ individuals in western culture, the literature concerning the contexts of Muslim and particularly Pakistani gay men remains almost nonexistent. This study aims to correct this gap by providing a comprehensive, rich qualitative data regarding the identity formation of Pakistani gay men through the narrative mode. Through narrations and oral life history interviews, a comprehensive data is aimed to be gathered regarding the experiences of young gay men and how their experiences shaped their personality. Not only will this be a research breakthrough but will also provide a frame of reference that casts a light on the social struggles of the sexual minorities that may supply grounds for the betterment of these conditions. Furthermore, the results of this study have implications in the field of clinical psychology as well as queer psychology, sexual psychology and social psychology and will also provide a framework for future studies in Pakistan regarding sexual minorities. For bringing awareness to a social problem is the first step towards its correction.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To highlight how a young gay man's identity is formed in the context of Pakistani society.
- To gain an understanding of what social and cultural factors exist that affect the formation and protection of this identity.
- To gain an understanding of the dilemmas and problems faced by young gay men and how it affects their self-image and identity formation.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the narratives of young gay men, regarding their identity formation in Pakistan?

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Upon the analysis of written literature targeting gay populations, the general trend originates from the western side of the globe. That too mostly comprises of articles and researches conducted after the 1980s, after the aids epidemic affected America. The social struggles of gay men were highlighted and much researcher and literary support came from all over the world. However, this still only comprises of the west, the “maghrib.” East for the most part, still refuses to acknowledge the existence and the plight of its sexual minorities. This is attributed to many factors such as religious bias, illiteracy, patriarchy and many more. However, following the globalization of the world due to the internet in the 2010s, this has started to change. Gay community is starting to be acknowledged. People, particularly young people, are talking about phenomenons recently ignored. In this chapter, researches regarding the analysis and discussion of how society, culture and the overall state of the community affects a gay man’s sense of worth and identity will be discussed. And how a gay man forms his self-expression and identity in spite and because of these factors at play. The articles discussed in this chapter are mostly recent ranging from 2008 to as recent as 2021. Indigenous articles have been included even though Pakistani researches for the most part have ignored this research topic.

International Researches

Jaspal (2014) discusses how the dissolution of romantic relationships casts an effect on the identity of gay men. The author discusses how generally relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution is connected with threats to identity but little has been discussed with association to the gay population. To correct this literature gap, sixteen self-identified gay

men of the British south Asian descent were asked to provide insights into their experiences and how they coped with the dissolution of their relationships and also how this impacted their identity. The results of the research were analyzed through IPA as well as the framework provided by identity process theory. Jaspal (2014) outlines the following themes in his paper: (i) the construction of the gay man's identity around the romantic relationship; (ii) the breakdown of the romantic relationship and its threat to the identity of the individual and (iii) the repairment of this broken identity in silence. The data of the results indicated the significance and the focus point role romantic relationships tend to take for identity formation and consequently, its effects on the enhancement as well as determent of the identity in case of possible dissolution. The participants of the study were seen to be relying significantly intrapsychic as well as strategies that were based on deflection for coping with the identity threat posed by dissolving relationships. This is also accountable to the fact that south Asian households are generally not very supportive of gay men. The study also showed that members of minorities that are afraid of disclosing their sexual orientations tended to use unhealthy coping strategies when coping with relationship dissolution, exposing their identities to chronic threat (Jaspal, 2014).

Hammack (2008) conducted an in-depth study on configurations of identity among sexual minority youths. The article comprised of a theoretical analysis as well as four narratives of youth that were focused on the intersection and relationship between identity and desire of sexual minorities. Two lesbians and two gay men were recruited and their narratives were recorded through interviews. The integration of sexual attraction to the same sex and the everyday identity were analyzed using a holistic interpretative lens. The analysis of the narratives yielded similar characteristics among the experiences of youths in sexual minorities. Mainly the challenges they face in order to integrate their sexuality, behavior and identity into a single configuration. The implications of social support particularly by the

family was also a key factor in dangers to identity protection and portrayal. The subjects also reportedly felt at an incongruence between their real selves and their publicly portrayed selves and the effects of heteronormative cultures were also analyzed. The article however, was limited in its generalizability as the subjects were taken from the same educational institution.

Dorans (2017) conducted a research on gay men's identity formation through narratives of their erotic and romantic relationships. And as a gay man himself, he uses the narrative method to deeply dive as well as relate to the intricacies of this concept. He starts off by discussing how being is not just being homosexual and how it entails a whole identity and social phenomenon. He discusses how 'being gay' has been commonly equated to 'being homosexual' and, although sexual relationships are one of the most common themes in research about gay men, studies often investigate them from a strictly epidemiological perspective. Dorans (2017) on the other hand, explores the contributions that sexual, erotic, and romantic connections make to gay men's sense of identity. He interviewed ten gay men of different ages and backgrounds living in the United Kingdom, each of whom provided narrative data during unstructured one-to-one, one-off interviews. Using a narrative structural analysis, his findings are presented in two ways: first he uses the form of idiographic narratives provided by his five participants and secondly, he makes use of an encompassing analysis that highlights the central, common themes across the different individuals' narratives. The results indicated that generally gay men construct their identities in such a way that their romantic and sexual relationships hold central position in this process. And that being gay pervades their sense of self and identity in such a way that it has an effect on almost all their life experiences. It will not be incorrect to say that being gay is the major domain of their life. This research concludes by challenging the conception of 'being gay' as

a sexual orientation because it describes in sexual terms an identity that is not only, not always, and not predominantly sexual.

Hammack (2011) conducted a research examining the narrative and politics of exclusion on the identities of gay and lesbians. The research analyzes that at this time in America, the political and social situations surrounding sexual identity have changed dramatically. Through the analytic lens of narrative research, this paper focuses on the implications of social and political exclusion on the identities of same-sex attracted individuals on their life course as well as identity formation and protection. The researcher brought into use the illustrative evidence through an autobiographical study concerning gay men over the period of sixty years. These experiences highlighted the discourse of the contemporary modern youth attracted to the same sex and highlighted the common themes of exclusion, as well as historic silence on the identities of these young people that resulted in negative events like social withdrawal, anxiety, depression, fear of abandonment and identity threats.

McKinney (2018) discusses gay men's identities and how religion, specifically Christianity and counselling affects this phenomenon. Spirituality, religion and sexuality are complex phenomena that are constantly interacting within a person's identity. To highlight this interaction, the researcher aimed to capture the narratives of gay males who were Christian and discover themes through the analysis of semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the researcher sought to answer, "What are the narratives of gay males who have a Christian religious identity?" The participants were eight adult males who self-identified as gay, male, and Christian. A narrative analysis was conducted in order to gain, understand, and analyze salient narratives from participants. The major themes that were highlighted through these interviews included the development of the understanding of one's self, the complex mosaic of one's emotions and lastly, the recognition of one's self-worth.

Ali and Koc (2021) conducted a research on the challenges to the identity integration of Muslim south Asian men that are in sexual minorities. The authors discuss that Muslim south Asian men that are in sexual minorities face an intersection of prejudices including racism, homophobia and islamophobia. To analyze the effects of these phenomenons, they recruited 38 sexual minority British Muslim South Asian via snowball sampling. They were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and the resulting data was analyzed through thematic analysis. This analysis gave the common themes of: the hegemonic whiteness in the LGBTQ+ community, the levels of “outness” that the men had with their social circles, the internalization of the domination, the distancing of one’s self from the ingroup of the sexual minority religio-culture and lastly, the attempts to reorganize the conflicts between the sexual identity and the religious and cultural identities. The interviews highlighted the extreme social exclusion faced by the participants as well the lack of the support from within the community. This resulted in the significant isolation faced by the individuals as well the negative psychological implications on the identity formation and an overall shunning of the personality.

Indigenous Researches

Afzal (2014) discusses how Muslim cultures react and respond to homosexuality and how this shapes the identity of the gay men. This is an important contribution to the literature regarding LGBTQ+ researches as this research is indigenous in nature and takes a sample of Pakistani men in consideration. The author draws on research with South Asian Muslim American gay men of Pakistani descent that currently live in Houston and aimed to investigate the everyday implications of sexuality, race, religion and transnationalism. He highlighted the three intersecting factors that put Pakistani Muslim gay men in the context of local, cultural as well as traditional mediums. Using oral life history interviews as well as participant the researcher closely analyzes upon the: (a) the construction of the culturally

effected phenomenon of the male sexuality that is influenced by the language, idioms, and other scripts of homo-sociality as well as love and relationships generally in the homeland (Pakistan) (b) the growing focal point of belonging and associating with a Muslim ummah that is transnational and (c) the influence of the west, particularly of their terminologies and categories in the construction of a gay male identity. The narratives that were examined in this research delivered a transnational and transcultural analysis of sexual identities of Muslim sexual minorities and how the west and their own culture influences the formation of their identity. This is one of the only researches of its kind that considers the impact of a Muslim society on gay men of Pakistani descent.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

3.1 Paradigm

Keeping in view with the Social Constructivism (Creswell, 2013) approach in research, an insight into reality constructed through social conventions and the supposed facts generated through shared discourse about those conventions is aimed to be gained. As a research paradigm, social constructionism is concerned with the nature and construction of a phenomenon. Hence, the cultural aspects will be explored in this paper and how these aspects cast an impression on the identity formation of gay men. Moreover, the distinction of these narratives were also noted, as no objective reality will be taken into consideration but rather the reality seen and experienced through each of the participant's experiences.

3.2 General Assumptions

Based on literature review the following assumptions are formulated:

- The identity of gay men is characterized by confusion and guilt from a young age.
- The religious and patriarchal society casts a negative impact on the identity formation of gay men.
- The ideals of masculinity and culture are threats to identity protection.
- They receive little moral support from family and culture.
- They are taught to repress their true self.
- They have difficulty in accepting their true self.
- This pretending and acting casts an incongruence between true self and the portrayed self, radiating confusion and guilt on the identity.
- These social phenomenons cause gay men to look for unhealthy ways of coping.

- Finding community and understanding social circle is a turning point for identity formation and protection.

3.3 Research Design

The study was aimed at being a simple qualitative study of the narrative nature (Creswell, 2013). It is concerned with the experiences as expressed in the lived and told stories of individuals and the meanings that these stories hold for the individuals. An oral history approach was adopted, that focused on gathering personal reflections of events as well as their causes and effects (Plummer, 1983). Narrative method of research was deemed the most suitable for the study at hand as it provides the research with a rich qualitative data regarding the experiences of the individual. While also acknowledging that reality is subjective and also bringing in use more, diverse forms of data than just interviews. The literary form of the research design provides one with the general guidelines to how it should process: a beginning, a middle and the resolution. This is extremely valuable when we aim to analyze the narrative accounts of individual experiences as this research aimed to do. The narrative as both the method and the phenomenon of study was embraced. Narrative inquiry begins with the experiences of individuals as expressed and told by them through their told stories (Creswell, 2013). The method and the inquiry generally possess experiential initial points that are affected and influenced by the literature and the theoretical framework that instructs the methodology or the first understanding of the stories and experiences that the researcher started with (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In essence, narrative inquiry involves the reconstruction of a person's experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu.

Following the Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) method of narrative analysis, the following steps were incorporated into the analysis procedure: collection of stories in the

form of interviews, the retelling on these stories in keeping with the three dimensional space approach of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) based on interaction, continuity and situation as well as the five element approach of Yussen and Ozcan (1997) founded on the basic five elements of the plots of the stories (the characters, the setting, the problems faced, the actions and lastly, the resolution). Next, the stories collected were rewritten chronologically and incorporated into the physicality of the location of the experiences.

The identification of the stories, the location of the epiphanies as described through narratives, interpretation of the larger meanings of the story, relating with the identity process theory and the Cass identity model and highlighting the unique nature of experiences is the main procedure of the narrative analysis that was adopted in the current study.

3.4 Sampling Strategy

Purposive snowball sampling strategy was used. Purposive sampling involves selecting cases that meet specific predetermined criterion of importance (Tongco, 2007). While snowball sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling where already recruited subjects recruit future participants for the study from among their acquaintances (Parker, 2019). This sampling strategy was employed as the gay community and all sexual minorities are tight knit and these connections can be brought into use. A semi-structured narrative interview was brought into use and the interviews were conducted in person, in Lahore, Pakistan. Consent was taken regarding the recording of the interviews and the participants were sufficiently debriefed regarding the procedure as well as the topic of the research. Table 1 describes a summarization of the demographics of the sample.

Table 1*Demographics of the Sample*

Sr #	Initials	Age	Nationality	Gender	Occupation	Sexuality	Relationship Status	Taken people into confidence regarding sexuality	Chronic Health Problems
1.	H.	23	Pakistani	Cis Male	Computer Engineer	Gay	Single	Yes (Friends and family)	No
2.	S.J.	22	Pakistani	Cis Male	Student	Gay	In a relationship	Yes (Friends and family)	No
3.	Z.	21	Pakistani	Cis Male	Student	Gay	Single	Yes (Friends)	No
4.	A.	24	Pakistani	Cis Male	Corporate Social Media Manager	Gay	Single	Yes (Friends and family)	No

3.5 Inclusion Criteria

- In keeping with WHO's definition of youth, participants between the age range of 15-24 will be selected as the research topic targets young gay population.
- Individuals that are biologically male and self-identify as such will be chosen.
- In addition, males that identify as "gay" will be selected. Where gay is taken to mean a man that is romantically and sexually interested in members of the same sex.
- Men that have a prior dating history and have taken people into confidence about their sexual orientation such as friends or family.

3.6 Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals with any chronic health problem (physical health conditions that last more than one year, requiring ongoing medical care) such as cancer or diabetes will not be selected.
- Bisexual men will also not be selected as the current study only aims to discuss gay men.
- Individuals with no prior dating history will also not be chosen.
- Individuals with a nationality other than Pakistani will not be selected.

3.7 Procedure

The research commenced formally following the approval from the board of Kinnaird College for Women University. The participants were approached once this permission had been granted. Purposive snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013) was performed after the approval of sample size. Information sheet and consent form were provided along with the demographic form to the individuals. They were debriefed regarding the nature and purpose of the study. Consent for the recording and note-taking was taken. After receiving written consent, the participants were asked to fill the demographic sheets and the research officially commenced with the conduction of the semi-structured interview.

As the interview was tailored to be a semi structured interview, it was not meant to be followed to a t. actually it had the capacity to be modified according to the situation, the person and the wish of the researcher. An interview guide was to be followed for this purpose. The interviews were conducted in person so a richer, more detailed data could be obtained.

Before the formal initiation of the research process, pilot testing was conducted with the application of the interview guide and a semi structured interview was conducted. After the seamless completion of the interview, the participant was asked to provide feedback on how the research could be improved. Their comments were listened to and heeded. Revamping of the interview guide (i.e., changing the verbatim so that it would be more comprehensible to a layman) was completed following this critique.

After the gathering of data through the first interview, the researcher took the gathered data into consideration and took another follow up interview in case of any ambiguities and vagueness. After data saturation had been achieved, narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was applied to analyze the various themes and domains of the interviews. In Narrative analysis, first the research participants interpret their own lives through narrative. Then the researcher interprets the construction of that narrative (Delve & Limpaecher, 2020). The following steps were adopted for the conduction of narrative analysis: coding of narrative blocks, grouping and reading by live-event, creating nested story structure blocks, delving into the story structure, comparing across story structure and telling the core narrative. The domains and themes gathered through extensive review of literature included: confusion, coping and acceptance. In order to gain a deep and complete understanding regarding each of these themes, they are examined individually with elaborations regarding the sub themes through the direct quotations of the participants, in keeping with the narrative criterion so that their individual voice can be maintained. And only the initials of the participants are included as per their request and in keeping with the ethical regulations to maintain confidentiality and privacy. The participants were also approached in order to help analyze the data they had provided in order for the research paper to be in accordance with their narrative and to make sure that the research does not border on offensive or disrespectful.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

In order to conduct this research, following ethical considerations were kept in mind:

- Written consent was obtained from the participants on the consent sheet provided.
- The names of the participants were changed or only initials were used in order to maximize anonymity as the nature of the study at hand as well as the sampling methodology may pose problems regarding confidentiality if correct names were brought in use.
- Participants were assured that the obtained data will only be used for research purposes.
- Confidentiality of the data was strictly maintained and no one outside of the research team had access to the information obtained as this is a rather sensitive topic.
- Participants were provided with the information sheet containing all knowledge about the nature, purpose, duration. Procedure and their role as well as whom to contact in case of a query.
- They were given the free choice of dropping out of the research at any time.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results of the narratives of young gay men in Pakistan. The participants shared their narratives through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data retrieved from these semi-structured interviews helped answer the research question: what are the narratives of young gay men, regarding their identity formation in Pakistan? For the analysis of this data, thematic narrative analysis was adopted. This included first and foremost, the transcribing of the data and the thorough reading and rereading of the transcripts. Only by familiarizing oneself aptly, were the emergent themes of the narrative data noted. Later, by further familiarizing of the complete data as a complete, singular unit, the links and connections between these emergent themes were discovered and grouped under three main major themes. Through the analysis of the narratives, one can see that the narratives of young gay men living in Pakistan, regarding their identity formation are: (a) initial development of identity, (b) societal implications on identity, and (c) recognition and integration of identity. Table 2 illustrates the generated themes and subthemes of the data. These themes and subthemes answer the research question: what are the narratives of young gay men, regarding their identity formation in Pakistan?

Table 2*Themes and subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
Initial development of identity	Sexual assault
	Gender identity crisis
	Religious identity crisis
	Queer trauma
Societal implications on identity	Sexism
	The heteronormative default
	Sexual and romantic challenges
	Western Queerness
Recognition and Integration of identity	I contain multitudes

4.1: Theme 1 Initial development of identity

The narratives of young gay men in Pakistan regarding their identity formation reflected a continuous and ever-evolving development of self-understanding. It became rather distinct during the process of data analysis that the all four participants discussed how their sense of self developed gradually over time. This phenomenon becomes more apparent when you analyze the narratives through a chronological lens. This constant development of identity is made distinct when participants describe their early lives, adolescence, adult lives and potential futures. No participant maintained that their identity stayed unchanging from the beginning of their narrative journey to the end.

This continuous and ongoing development is signified by H's statement of transitioning from his house to a boarding school and the effect it had on his personality:

“They admitted me to a college, a male, uh, boarding school in the, in my first year, second year post matric. And they thought oh he's gonna be a man. All, you know, all of a sudden that initially, the first few months of that boarding experience, it did change me, changed me in a way that I started, you know, I started becoming who I was not, but I could see, the image I saw, you know, this is not me that I'm, I'm literally going out of my way to make sense for this world, and it hurts when I do that. It hurts me from the inside. Sending me out of the house actually liberated me. I was surrounded by hundreds of men who were bullies and assholes and whatnot. But I was so courageous and so powerful that I took my agency and I took that as an opportunity to liberate myself, discover myself, and find who I really am.”

H. displayed a continually evolving, changing, complex personality that is shaped by all the multiple experiences he has gone through. Whether it be sexual assault or coming out to his trusted friends, the beautiful ever-flowing construction of this personality and identity, and his self-understanding of it, is modified, shaped and impacted by every single event in his life. His identity formation and understanding asserts as being an amalgamation of all his past experiences and future potential. And H. shares this characteristic with all the participants that were interviewed.

The development of this self-understanding is not an easy process but is rather impacted by many a factor. For example, in discussing his sexual identity, Z. said “being gay is also political. It's also spiritual. And it is, uh, a lot, many things” signifying that this sexual identity is subject to many psychological, personal factors. Or A.’s statement “So with time, uh, I evolved. And I realized, see society taught me all the norms that it teaches everyone. I just unlearned all of those things. It’s part of my evolution into, you know, like, uh, creating my own identity.” And S.J.’s statement that “So religion has already like played a way big role. Though the religion in there, you find out that there is no place for sexuality. Then

maybe the first response is, okay, you know, it's just me who's wrong, and you try to correct yourself. You try to repress your sexuality and that doesn't work out.” display the dichotomy, struggles and social phenomenons that impacted the process of the understanding and formation of identity. Five subthemes came underneath the main theme of “Initial development of identity” (a) Sexual assault, (b) Gender identity crisis, (c) Religious identity crisis and (d) Queer trauma. These subthemes were categorized under this main theme because the participants described their concept of self-understanding through these dimensions at one or other points in their narratives. While the main theme of “Development of the understanding of identity” is the larger theme, it is made clear and different from its subthemes through the elaboration of its context and quotes. Hence all subthemes maintain their distinctiveness even if their significance variates.

(a) 4.1.1: Sexual Assault all four of the participants reported some form of sexual assault, bullying and discrimination during the course of their narratives. Sexual assault is a scarring act that not only affect one’s life when it does take place but the ripples of this experience can last entire life times. Especially when this heinous act occurs at a young age. It can cast a shade of doubt over an individual’s sense of self and put them in a state of confusion and anxiety (Davies, 2002). This state of disorientation is evidenced by H.’s statement regarding sexual assault at a young age “, I actually don't know. Okay. What do I feel about them now? Hm. Which honestly, so, so this, the maulvi part where he attempted rape and like, was like he was, he was penetrating and it wasn't happening because I was literally a child and he was a man. It was difficult for him. So, all of those things and him violating me and I was so confused, what is happening?” this state of confused anxiety was also shared by other participants as evidenced by Z’s recollection of his experience with a professor, “And I was like, what? And uh, you know, he

touched me inappropriately. I mean, um, I, I was still a child. I felt uncomfortable, but I couldn't do anything about it. I had a crush on him. So, I was like, I, things didn't even make any sense. I couldn't even process the things. He, he would, uh, touch me inappropriately in the bus and all. Um, I was like, I kept my distance. and it was like, not okay. Uh, but I couldn't do anything about it. No. I was a child also a very, um, a closeted child. Who is also getting bullied at school and who is like, who has no friends at all to talk to, no family to talk to. So, it was like, it just, it was difficult.”

(b) 4.1.2: Gender Identity Crisis all four of the participants interviewed expressed undergoing a gender identity crisis very early in their life attributable either to the sexual assault discussed earlier or the gender non-conforming behavior they displayed during their childhoods. They expressed further the rebuke or scolding they faced upon the display of this behavior and the constant reiteration of “you are a boy, behave like one” and the confusion they felt upon hearing this. As A. states that “I was almost, uh, 10, uh so i loved to, dress up like in my mom's clothes. make a sari out of her dupatta and you know. So, like I remember doing that, like we used to live in a joint family. So, think of it in that context and the backlash it incited that “Oh my God, what is he doing?” But I remember like my mother also scolded that you should not have done this, but she did not discourage me either. She basically said that okay you like doing this, but just like keep in mind, okay, you shouldn't do it in front of others. Okay? I don't mind you doing this because this is what you, this is what you like. This is how you want to be, but you are a boy and you have to be a boy, and you can't do it in front of others. or else people will make fun of you. I can be who I want to but at the same time, like keep telling the world. Okay. I'm a man so you know it creates that conflict in

your identity.” This phenomenon of gender identity crisis is further exemplified by H’s statement that “people who call themselves, um, gay or people who call themselves not straight. They don't like, they have a confused, uh, gender perception of themselves as well. But, and I'll tell you why, because, uh, while we were growing up as I was growing up, And I would feel that, oh my God, I like men. And why is it so, since there were no mainstream answers, there was, I didn't know the word gay as a child. I didn't know that men can like men too. The only answer that I got from the outside world was, oh, they are women. So if internally I feel like I like men, it is only possible if I act like a woman because that is when it'll make sense for me. And that is when, when it'll make sense for the other people. And that is what I think is a major wrong thing that we do to ourselves. We didn't have examples. We didn't have any sort of, um, uh, guidance. So our gender perception also sort of, um, uh, changed due to the fact that we wanted it to make sense. this is not how it's supposed to be. Uh, in, in, in the world that we want to live in, gay people have to find examples in their societies. Okay? Okay. A guy can like a guy and can act like a man as well, can act as, as, as whatever he feels like. They do not have to change their gender perception of themselves in order for them to validate whether or not who should they be liking.”

(c) 4.1.3: Religious Identity Crisis as the men interviewed got older and entered adolescence and young adulthood, religion became an important part of their lives. As all 4 of the men belonged to self-proclaimed middle class, religious, Islamic families, religious identity was an integral part of their complete, integrated sense of self as a whole. So, the dilemma they faced when coming to terms with their sexual identities is apparent through the analysis of their narratives as they struggled to make sense of the world around them while

simultaneously making sense of themselves. As Z. describes in his narrative “Religion. Like, um, it has given me a very tough time, like uh, like, you know, I was this very religious person I like I was very religious. I was a practicing Muslim. I would also preach a lot. So, but you know there was a point, there was a conflict between my reality and, you know, uh, the religion I was, I belonged to. The conflict carried on. Uh, and there was this breaking point. I was like, okay, the religion would have to answer more than what it has been answering to me. You know, a religion is a religion. I cannot change it. I cannot. You know, um, fight against it or I cannot even, um, hate it for being how it is. I mean, it, it is there, it's a reality and, uh, um, I would validate it. So yeah, that's how a religion, uh, has played its role in my life and my identity”

H. also further talks about this discrepancy and the confusion this created in his identity formation as this conflict arose “Religion was very important to me as a child. When I was abused by a religious scholar, my first reaction to that was if something is wrong with the religion in of itself. But then i realized that and I'm, I'm, I'm hating religion for no reason. Um, that was that man's problem. To overcompensate, I started learning Quran, I started reading translations. In first year, second year, went to Peshawar, same thing happened because my opinions were very, very brutally honest and, and also, uh, controversial. They started people started literally attacking me. That is when I started to tone it down a little bit then a time came when all the justification, i had given to myself that this is due to that and all the reasons I had given to myself that religion is perfect started to weaken. Religion started to tire me. Why do I have to go out of my way, to put so much energy into something that I can simply not give a fuck about. This is what started happening or started fading away from my life. I started becoming

agnostic. I had started having the narrative. Sure, the God has to be there, even if he. The mechanism that he has sent in forms of religion. I don't have to necessarily agree with him to be in his good books. I can be empathetic towards people. I can do great things. I can do good things. I can, I can be the, the most beautiful person on the face of this planet. And if he's the God that he says that he is. He will take it for all its worth. He will not be looking at things in black and white and if he does, i, don't think he's, my God, I don't think he's omnipotent. I don't think that he's as capable as he gives himself the credit for. So, understanding of religion and I've never, the one thing that I will be put to hell put in hell about would be if I mess with somebody else's life, I will tell him Nobody else gets to take away that agency from me to.”

(d) 4.1.4: Queer Trauma in keeping with queer theory in the theoretical framework, queer trauma is also of utter importance when discussing the narratives of the men interviewed. The trauma and hardships these individuals went through merely on the basis of their sexual orientation and the impact this had on their identity formation is of critical significance. Whether it be from the discrimination H. faced while expressing himself sartorially, “So, um, I have piercings so i started wearing earrings. I started wearing jewelry. I started wearing, um, sort of dresses that I liked and everything. And that is when I realized that some people, and when I say some people, I mean the women in the office were extremely empathetic, were extremely okay with it, and they don't have to agree with me. To be able to empathize with me, to be able to understand me as a human being. And that is when I realized that in the Office, women would look at me with respect because they would see my work and not how I was dressed. And that made me feel really good. But the men in the office were absolute assholes to me, to a point

that my manager had to come up to me and say that you have to tone it down a little Because the men in the office have a problem with it and they don't understand what you are doing” or S.J. facing sexual bullying on the basis of his orientation “Um, in childhood when I used to be in my boarding school, um, there was a time and there was, it wasn't just a moment, it was years and years of my friends and roommates who knew that I had perhaps sex with one person, one man, you know, trying to blackmail into also having sex with them. So like the spiral of your abuse that had to go through for a long amount of time, and this was the bullying, was sexual bullying.”

4.2: Theme 2 Societal Implications on Identity

This theme discusses with the implications that society set down on the individuals and how it impacted their sense of who they are. How the general day to day conduct has to be modified to keep up with the social rules and regulations put in place by society that is an amalgamation of culture, religion and many other intersecting, interjecting factors at play. This theme is distinct from theme one as it only takes into regard the social behavior and actions and the factors that contribute to them and eventually to the identity formation of the individuals interviewed. Whereas, theme one deals with the internal processes and experiences that led to the process of identity formation.

The socialization, the implication of this socialization on behavior and the resulting ramifications are exemplified by S.J’s narrative on culture and religion “Culture again, we are living in a religious culture. We cannot divorce our religion from the culture itself. Our culture is quite literally like, you know, constructed by religion itself. So especially when you grow up in religious communities. So but even like in just dominant Punjabi culture that I'm known in, for instance, I'm an ethnic ethnically, I'm a Punjabi, so. You know, there is a lot of

masculinization. For instance, you're told to behave in a certain way that this is what makes a man a man. You have to wear white shalwar kameez and you have to walk a certain way and you know, when if something to that effect, I don't know what it is. So, there is just a lot of stupidity. In the culture as well. It forces you to behave in a hypermasculine way and to objectify women. Objectify, not women in any but objectify. Any other deviant. That is a non cis male. Culture. So, religion, culture, society, society, society. I mean, again, society is just a, the way I perceive society is just like, it's a mixture of all of these things. So just as I was saying before now, okay, it's just a mess. But it acts coherently, you don't know. How religion and let's say Punjabi culture are inter, are interconnected. They're not, they're very different things.”

All four of the participants talked through their narratives about the role society plays as a cohesive unit on the person they acted as in public space, often reflecting on two distinct personalities existing within themselves; the true person on the inside and the one displayed on the outside in keeping with rules set down. As evident through their narratives four subthemes emerged in this context, namely: (a) Sexism, (b) The heteronormative default, (c) Sexual and romantic challenges and (d) Western Queerness each of which be analyzed using the participants own voice with their direct narratives.

(a) 4.2.1: Sexism sexism and its effects can be again back to the implications of queer theory. All four of the participants discussed patriarchy, and the effects it had on their behavior. Interestingly, the participants also acknowledged the privilege this patriarchy awarded them, discussing both the negative and positive consequences of this social phenomenon on their actions, behaviors and eventually identity formation. As evidenced by Z's discussion regarding his conduct with his boyfriend at the time and the privileges and indifferences it awarded them that perhaps could not have happened if a woman was in their place “Pakistan is a very

heteronormative, uh, culture, uh, hetero, patriarchal culture. There are these, uh, difficulties for, uh, queer men but there are also these privileges, certain that we get, like, uh, if a guy and a girl want to be together in, in public, public places, it'll be difficult for them, but two men or two women can be there. you know, uh, we can still, uh, we can still be in the same room and nobody will, would question it. And in fact, it was a lot easier like the because now people have started talking about it. So, I think things would get difficult for us in this, in this transitioning phase, maybe things will turn out for something better, maybe for worse. But this phase is something like we, we used to live an easy life, easy dating life. In fact, the, the culture thing, the hetero patriarchal culture, it just, uh, I find it really interesting. I mean, I, I used to take my boyfriend to my home and nobody would question it. My parents were like, oh you made such a good friend (laughs) Like in fact, even in nobody questioned him and all. I used to stay there and it was like, no, nobody questioned it. Um, in fact, um, when i started university, my parents were if you make a friend, make one like him (laughs), I was like, sure, why not.”

H. discusses the discrimination he faced on the basis of his sartorial expression specifically from men and what contributed to this sexist, patriarchal attitude

“men who have regressive sexualities, they have regressive gender identities. Um, you can see them in the room. They're trying to constantly fight this urge to be themselves. Yet they cannot because they are probably, they've, they have, haven't ever felt that they can, they can, they can express themselves. They have never felt that they can be themselves. Somebody having the courage enough to be themselves, it scares them. It frightens them because they think that if this person continues to exist here, it would endanger us as well. So, this is one thing that I've noticed. Once they see somebody so happy, when they see somebody living on

their own terms, it makes them feel so shit about themselves. It makes them, it makes them feel so weird about themselves that they start. They start targeting us and they start, you know, sort of saying that the problem is in you when the real problem is inside themselves, they don't have, I don't think they have a problem with who we are because honestly, when you look at these men, they don't give a fuck about anything in this world yet they would give, uh, sort of, they would care about these things. Why? Because this is what makes them feel shit about themselves.”

(b) 4.2.2: The Heteronormative Default owing to many factors, some of which are discussed prior such as sexism, all 4 of the participants discussed how they carry themselves in their daily lives, especially with families with a “default mode” of being a straight, cis man. They often used words like “pretending, acting, conflict etc.” to discuss this dissonance between their real and portrayed self. S.J. discusses his social behavior in his narrative as “So that's how I carry generally myself socially. My default mode is a, is a straight man. Who is just sexist, uh, as anyone. So that's my default mode in society, in my, in my familial settings, in my, um, extended family, in my, most of my like friend circles, et cetera. It can also range from small micro instances, um, of having to pretend to be a straight man when you really are not. Um, for instance, laughing at maybe sexist jokes in a conservative family setting, um, just to overcompensate them to the fact that you might not appear to be, you know, gay, um, or having to go through this pressure of speaking against the movement. Speaking against, my own people having to support colonial stereotypes like and whatever in order to appear to be, you know, appear to, in order to basically survive.”

(c) 4.2.3: Sexual and Romantic Challenges Sexual and romantic challenges are faced by people of sexual minorities all over the world but when placed in the context of Pakistani society, where sexual and romantic encounters are already ostracized, this adds another dimension to the phenomenon. How these men operate in their romantic lives and the challenges they face, both in linking with and finding other men as well as connecting to them based on their ideals and stereotypical representation is integral not only in understanding their romantic and sexual demeanors but also in comprehending how these social encounters shape the identities of these young gay men in Pakistan. As A. explains “Uh, basically my job is also the day-to-day community outreach. Just the number of young men seeking for other young men. Uh, uh. That's the dilemma of it. There are like, uh, 10 peoples looking for partnerships. Individually. Does it make any sense to you? Like all ten of them are looking for a partner but not looking at each other” S.J. further elaborates on the problems and difficulties in his narrative “And, um, like very first or second, um, interaction that I had was, um, with a man who categorically told me that I know what I'm doing is a sin but I just want to try it out. I'm like, okay. Uh, then there's another man that I met, met me meet, and they're like, I'm basically an imposter who's just trying to civilize you and tell you that this is wrong. I mean, there, there is just a lot of weird stereotypical notions. I mean, body commenting, body shaming is very common. Consent is also something because again, gay men are men at the end of the day, they don't understand what meaningful consent is, so you give them consent and then they take it to every stretch possible and you don't have the ability to say no. It is only in sex that I realize that there are standards that my body must fit. So when, even when like we do like get sex for instance, it is, it is rarely satisfactory. It's more

animal. It's just the devoid of any human intimacy at all. Uh, and that's what worries me. Um, because if you take intimacy out of the sexual relationship itself, then all the sexual relationship is reduced to, is just a violent back and forth, a violent, animalistic encounter. And there's nothing to it, quite honestly. So, I feel like the fact that we haven't. Like gay and generally, you know, are discouraged to have sex. There are so many internal conflicts. Then when we finally do get the opportunity to have sex, it's all just sex. There's nothing more to it, and that, that, that has significantly impacted my sexual relations."

- (d) 4.2.4: Western Queerness** a phenomenon that almost all of the participants discussed in detail in their narratives was the concept of western queerness and the impact that an imported, colonized notion of systematic, rigid sexuality has on the understanding of self is extremely important to discuss. The participants gave extensive statements on the harmful effects of how this imported notion of the white man takes away from their own cultural identity and makes society view them as more of a threat. As A. states "That's not helping us in any way. Male or female? I don't give a fuck. I don't care. You should not give us fancy terms. N i l g b t q y e n plus, uh, it's, it's just like colonial history of divide and rule." And S.J. elaborates ". So I feel like what I have a problem with is the way the Western sexuality, the West is basically framing sexuality and framing gay. Can become a source of colonialism, a source of cultural imperialism. because when the colonizer came here, that's what he said, right? "The women here are forced to wear burkas, we will go free them!" We were the people, you know had Madho Hussain, Bulleh Shah you know. We had a history that defied conceptions of gender, or you come here, you tell us your Protestant Christianity, then you leave. I have a very big problem with the fact, okay, I don't want to assign or align with

the Western queer culture. Suddenly, who are you to liberate me? Can I not find liberation in my own culture? Can I not interpret my religion in a way that I want to? Who are you to tell me, okay, I, I have to wear a rainbow flag. I have to come out of the closet. I mean, there is a lot, westernization. . Is there going to be a generational change? I don't see a great hope of it, to be very honest. Um, unless, we stop following the West. I feel like trauma is, is of the essence of colonial trauma. Necessitates that okay this man was our colonizer and we have to do the exact opposite of what he does. So I feel like the only way in which we can do this is by having our own understanding of queerness. And it's not like we didn't have it. We had it. We just need to rediscover it.”

4.3: Theme 3 Recognition and Integration of Identity

In keeping with the identity process theory, that revolves around identity assimilation, identity accommodation and eventually identity balance, the resulting narrative data from the participants interviewed also discussed an eventual integration of their sexual identities into their complete overall sense of self and how it impacted how they view themselves as unitary, whole individuals, not merely being reduced to their sexualities. As evidenced by S.J. concluding his narrative “I'm very glad that you asked me questions that are more social or more, you know, psychological as well, and doesn't necessarily like reduce it to the sexual part because one of the problems that I have, with how we view sexuality is that we reduce it to just an interplay of genitals and I don't want that to happen. I don't want people's identity to be reduced to their sexuality. I feel like people have bigger identity. For instance, I am a Punjabi as well. I'm a student as well. I have certain political beliefs as well. So, my queerness for is a, is a thing that I'm trying to like fight for, but doesn't mean that it's the only thing that I have.” His quotation very aptly sums up the phenomenon of integration of

sexuality into identity and how young gay men in Pakistan are much more than that. This major theme includes the singular theme of (a) I contain multitudes.

(e) 4.3.1: I Contain Multitudes in keeping with Walt Whitman's leaves of grass where he proclaims "I am large, I contain multitudes." All of the participants explained on how they had assimilated this aspect of their sexuality into the bigger person that they are, often reflecting upon how they contain many, countless individualities and identities and how their sexual orientation just happens to be one of them. As Z. states "I feel like personality is not, uh, a fixed or mechanical thing. It's, it's very dynamic and very fluid. Every single factor is integrated into it and impacts it. In turn personality also impacts every specific factor. So I think, uh, it (being gay) is a part of my personality, but it is also my personality" and A. asserts "I have a religious identity of my own and an ethnic identity of my own. Yes. A lingual identity of my own and all of these identities integrate into who I am as a person. I am a gay man but I am not just a gay man."

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed at exploring the narratives of young gay men in Pakistan, with a specific focus on their identity formation. The results of the research yielded various themes in this regard of the storytelling of their narratives. The major themes included (a) initial development of identity (sexual assault, gender identity crisis, religious identity crisis, queer trauma), (b) societal implications on identity (sexism, the heteronormative default, sexual and romantic challenges, western queerness) and (c) recognition and integration of identity (I contain multitudes).

Initial Development of Identity

The first major theme was initial development of identity. Early childhood experiences can have a lasting effect on one's personality and identity development, particularly if the experiences are traumatic and negative in nature such as sexual assault or physical or emotional abuse (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986).

This theme dealt with the different factors that influenced the participants' initial understandings of their sense of self and the how these factors impact the stories they narrate about their identity. As the Cass identity model (Cass, 1979) states, the process of identity formation and development is in constant state of evolution and change, as evidenced by the narratives of the participants discussed.

Sexual assault emerged as a notable subtheme. Sexual assault can have lasting emotional and psychological effects one's identity formation and narration of this identity. This abominable act can have lasting consequences (Lodrick, 2013). The participants seemed physically uncomfortable while recollecting this traumatic experience in their lives. They also

expressed uncertainty about how they felt about these interactions even at the current points in their lives often reflecting themselves that they had perhaps not processed it as well as they should have perhaps. They also mentioned the lack of social support regarding the assault and how it shaped their identity, often hiding this from family and friends because a safe space had not been provided to them to express the trauma, they had gone through even with the people closest to them. They also discussed how this sexual assault and trauma effects not only their identity but also added to gender identity crisis as well as still impacting their current relationships and interactions.

Attributed to their sexual assault as well as their sexual orientation, the participants discussed their gender identity crisis that is rather prevalent among members of sexual minorities (Kimmel, 1997). Since Pakistan is a sternly religious community where deviation from the socially determined norms is not tolerated and explicit dichotomies exist in almost all areas of life: a good woman or bad, a Muslim or a kafir, a shia or sunni etc (Rahman, 2009). The only answer provided to the participants when they digressed from the social perceptions of what a man should be, either in their behavior or their sexual desires, the only answer society provided them with was, that they must be women which contributed to a gender identity crisis. The narratives provided by the participants very aptly describe the entire psychological circumstances regarding this uncertainty related to their gender identity that these men faced when making sense of themselves and their self-concepts. This crisis of gender identity was perpetuated and reinforced by socialization that started from the immediate family and the home they lived in. If these men had been made comfortable enough to be themselves and given a safe space to express themselves, this in all likelihood would not have been the case, as obvious in the narratives provided.

As discussed earlier, to understand the narratives of the participants and to make sense of their stories regarding their identity formation, the context is extremely important. Every

thought they have, every consequent action they take, how those actions incorporate in their sense of self, the understanding they make of their own identities and finally how they communicate these identities can only be grappled completely when you understand that all these phenomenons took place in Pakistan, in extremely religious, middle-class families. Hence, their religious identities were very crucial to their sense of self. The crisis they faced when their religion was incongruent with their true selves is noteworthy. This religious crisis was very psychologically strenuous as they reached puberty and adulthood. The powerful, formed and unified narratives provided by the participants described the process that follows the phenomenon of religious crisis. Like the gender identity crisis discussed earlier, the first phase of religious crisis followed a state of panic where the person has their sense of what they believed in shattered and broken and in the next phase, a new set of beliefs is formed and integrated into the person's identity as they slowly came to terms with it

Queer trauma can also not be ignored when discussing the initial identity development of these men. This trauma included discrimination, harassment or bullying in the context of one's sexual orientation and was extremely essential to their sense of self formation of the men and people they are now and how they behave and carry themselves socially as a result of these experiences as seen through their narratives. This discrimination and harassment that stems solely from one's sexual orientation can have lasting impacts on their identity and personality formation (Kell, Lubitow, Town, et al. 2016).

Societal Implications on Identity

No behavior takes place in a vacuum. Hence, to thoroughly be cognizant of one's thoughts, actions and behaviors, we must take into account the context in which they take place. Pakistani society is an amorphous amalgamation of many interplaying, interjecting factors such as religion and culture that cannot be divorced from each other. This theme takes

into account the social actions and behaviors that contribute to the process of identity development and eventually, to the narratives of this identity.

Sexism and Patriarchy are undeniable realities of Pakistani society (Habiba, Ali, 2016). This social phenomenon that can be ascribed to many factors, affects not only women but also men (Marciano, 1986). As S.J. commented in his narrative, “gay men are also men.” Hence there is also ways that sexism impacts gay men and internalized misogyny and sexism impact their sense of self and the understanding they make of the world around them. Interestingly, the participants also acknowledged the advantages and the “perks” being a man in a patriarchal society awarded them. The direct statements from the participants provided us with an insight of the complex phenomenon of sexism and the advantages and disadvantages it provided the participants with and how in return impacted their social conduct, modifying and adding to their sense of self and identity formation and ultimately, the stories they told about their selves.

All participants discussed the dissonance between their real and portrayed selves when in public and social spheres and the conflict this behavior provides them with. They discussed their “default mode of being a straight, cis man” and used words like “testing” people to evaluate their levels of empathy and wokeness to see if they can be true selves with them. This constant struggle to hide who you really are even when you are in a vulnerable situation or having to actually speak against your own people and your own movements to uphold this false persona of being a straight, cis man and in a way invalidating your own existence in front of other people to gain respect and not be marginalized is extremely detrimental to one’s sense of self and identity as evidenced by the narratives of the men interviewed.

As discussed prior, Pakistan is a conservative society where discussions regarding romance and sex are considered rather taboo (Rahman, 2005). Hence, people of sexual minorities face a number of romantic and sexual challenges in expressing themselves. These challenges range from connecting with potential partners to the misconceptions and expectations that these partners may have at times, with no actual role models other than western media to look up to. Romantic and sexual experiences are very integral, personal experiences that can have significant repercussions on one's sense of self. Negative romantic experiences like rejection or inability to perform can have scarring mental effects (Birnbaum, Reis, Mikulincer, Gillath, & Orpaz, 2006). It is very important to take into regard these sexual and romantic challenges when attempting to understand the identity formation of these young men in question as all these encounters and experiences tend to have a very close, intimate impact on one's sense of self. Hence, instances of body shaming or the fear of being criminalized at any moment, for example, can have a lasting impact not only on one's demeanor but the formation and understanding of oneself as well as the expression and storytelling of this identity.

A particularly interesting theme that emerged from the narrative data was the concept and discussion of "western queerness" by the participants. They discussed how the concept, terminologies and sexual labeling such as gay, lesbian, trans etc. are actually all imported culture from the west particularly America. They also discussed how subcontinent has its own history of queer culture (such as Madho Laal Hussain and Barburnama) and that importing this alien culture of LGBTQ+ sexual orientations just makes the masses opposed to it as they view it as another form of colonizing oppression. Wearing rainbow flags, categorization and boxing of every aspect of human behavior is an intrinsically western concept whereas people of the subcontinent were historically more fluid and freer with themselves (Bakshi, 2016). The narratives of the participants very aptly captured the essence

of the impact that westernization of sexuality potentially has on the identity formation of young people in sexual minorities in Pakistan, in addition to discussing how they themselves, view it and integrate it into their own sense of self by creating an identity for themselves that integrates their sexuality as well as the culture they live in.

Recognition and Integration of Identity

In keeping with the Cass identity model (Cass, 1979) and Identity Process theory, (Jaspal, Breakwell, 2014) the last stage of the identity formation is characterized by identity balance and acceptance. Since the sample included young adults, all men had successfully come to terms with this part of themselves and treated it much like any other aspect of their personality such as religion or nationality.

Like Walt Whitman proclaims in leaves of grass, “I am large, I contain multitudes” the men also asserted how they were so much larger and bigger than just this one part of themselves. They discussed how yes, they were gay men but they were not just gay men. That they had lingual, ethnic, religious identities of their own as well that made them who they are. Their direct narratives elaborated on Aristotle’s expression of “a whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Being gay is an integral part of the participants’ identities and lives but they insist on how they must not be reduced to it, instead being appreciated for the people they are, in spite and because of their respective sexual orientations.

5.1 CONCLUSION

To conclude, three major themes were identified (a) initial understanding of identity, (b) societal implications on identity and (c) recognition and integration of identity. In addition, few subthemes were also identified that were sexual assault, gender identity crisis, religious identity crisis, queer trauma, sexism, the heteronormative default, sexual and romantic challenges, western queerness and I contain multitudes. The process of coming to terms with yourself while belonging to a sexual minority can be challenging and terrifying especially when early experiences are marked by negative aspects like sexual assault, gender and religious identity crisis, queer trauma, sexism, having to pretend as well as sexual and romantic struggles but through social support, friends and connecting with their own community as well as maturing and stabilizing oneself emotionally, the participants came to terms with their true selves and assimilated this part of their personalities into their overall sense of self. Social support as well as awareness and education in this regard would make this plight easier for future members of sexual minorities.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

- Talking about sexual orientation can be a rather sensitive topic, particularly traumatic experiences such as sexual assault and romantic experiences.
- Sample size was comparatively small and it reduces the external validity.
- Sample was taken from only from one city of Pakistan, Lahore which cannot account for the whole country. hence reducing the generalizability of the data.
- Since snowball sampling was performed, the generalizability of the data remains low.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS

- Further studies regarding sexual minorities in Pakistan should be conducted.
- Number of participants should be increased in future researches to add to external validity.
- Participants should be recruited from different cities of the country to add to the diversity of the data and increase generalizability. from different areas of the country should be collected so to avoid any risks
- Information and education should be available for people of sexual minorities and their families in order to reduce stress and friction.
- Future studies should also focus on other sexual minorities such as lesbians and transsexuals rather than just gay men.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Results of this study have implications in the field of clinical psychology as well as queer psychology, sexual psychology and social psychology.
- This study will provide a framework for future studies in Pakistan regarding sexual minorities.

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Appendix-A

The Interview Guide

Research Question: How are the identities of young gay men in Pakistan formed?	
Main Questions:	Probing Questions:
What does being gay mean to you? گے "ہونا آپ کے لیے کیا معنی رکھتا ہے؟"	How has being gay impacted your identity? گے "ہونا آپ کی شناخت کو کیسے متاثر کرتا ہے؟"
Can you tell me of a story or an instance that is significant to your identity as a gay man? کیا آپ کوئی ایسا واقعہ بیان کر سکتے ہیں جو آپ کی شناخت بطور ایک "گے مرد" اہمیت کا حامل ہو؟	What important events in your past, before the story, contributed to it? آپ کے ماضی کے کون سے واقعات نے اس پر اثر ڈالا؟ What have other people said about this story? دوسرے لوگوں کا اس واقعے کے بارے میں کیا کہنا ہے؟ How has your environment affected the story you told about your identity as a gay male? آپ کے ماحول نے اس واقعے پر اور آپ کی شناخت پر کیا اثر ڈالا؟ What factors in your opinion, contributed to the story going the way it did? آپ کے خیال میں کن عوامل نے اس کہانی کے اس طرح جانے میں کردار ادا کیا؟ How do you envision your future based on the story you shared and your identity? اس کہانی کو مدنظر رکھتے ہوئے آپ اپنے مستقبل کے بارے میں کیا سوچتے ہیں؟
You can tell me about the way you carry yourself socially? آپ سماجی طور پر خود کو کیسے لے کر چلتے ہیں؟	You can tell me about a significant story in this regard? آپ اس بارے میں کوئی اہم واقعہ بیان کر سکتے ہیں؟

	<p>You can talk about the circumstances you have felt discriminated against, bullied or harassed?</p> <p>آپ کسی ایسے واقعات کے بارے میں مجھے بتا سکتے ہیں جن میں آپ کے ساتھ امتیازی سلوک کیا گیا ہو؟ براساں یا تنگ کیا گیا ہو؟</p> <p>What in your opinion may have contributed to this behavior?</p> <p>آپ کے خیال میں اس قسم کے سلوک کو کن عوامل نے پروان چڑھایا؟</p>
<p>How has your romantic and sex life shaped your identity as a gay man?</p> <p>آپ کی جنسی اور رومانوی زندگی نے ایک "گے مرد" کی حیثیت سے آپ کو کیسے شناخت دی؟</p>	<p>You can talk about any unpleasant sexual or romantic encounters you have had that have shaped your identity.</p> <p>آپ کسی ناخوشگوار رومانوی واقعے کے بارے میں مجھے بتا سکتے ہیں جس نے آپ کی شناخت پر اثر ڈالا؟</p> <p>Can you talk a little about your first love/crush?</p> <p>آپ اپنے پہلے پیار کے بارے میں مجھے بتانا چاہیے گے؟</p> <p>You can tell me about the role sex and relationships play in your sense of yourself as a gay man.</p> <p>آپ کے رومانوی و جنسی واقعات آپ کی شناخت بطور ایک "گے مرد" پر کیا اثر ڈالتے ہیں؟</p>
<p>How society, culture and religion have played a role in your sense of identity?</p> <p>سماج، ثقافت اور مذہب نے آپ کی شناخت کی تشکیل میں کیا کردار ادا کیا؟</p>	<p>Any significant encounter related to your immediate family?</p> <p>اس سلسلے میں آپ کے خاندان سے جڑا کوئی اہم واقعہ؟</p>

	<p>How has your friend group been important in your identity formation?</p> <p>آپ کے دوستوں نے آپ کی شناخت کی تشکیل میں کیا کردار ادا کیا؟</p> <p>Have you faced any problems with having to connect to your community?</p> <p>کیا آپ کو آپ کی برادری تک رسائی میں کوئی مشکلات درپیش آئی؟</p>
<p>We have talked about a lot of things today. Is there anything else that I have not asked that you would like to share with me at this time that is significant to your identity as a gay male living in Pakistan?</p> <p>آج ہم نے بہت سے عوامل کے متعلق بات کی۔ کیا کچھ ایسا ہے جو بطور ایک "گے مرد" آپ کی شناخت کے لیے اہم ہے اور جس کے بارے میں ہم نے بات نہیں کی؟</p>	

As the proposed model is for a semi-structured interview, the guide is not planned to be followed strictly. It can be followed as the researcher sees fit in accordance with the situation and the participant in question. Objective and inoffensive language has tried to be used.

Appendix-B
Consent Form of Participants

Consent Form

Research Title: Identity Formation in Young Gay Men: A Narrative Inquiry

Researcher: Ayesha Rai

Supervisor: Zara Haroon

Kindly read the following statements:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. I accept the fact that I have thoroughly read and understood the provided information sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I accept that I was given the opportunity to know about the research and obtain answers about the queries. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The researcher(s) has told me about the aim, duration, and nature of research | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I am willingly participating in the research. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I know that I have the right to quit the research at any point. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I am ready to take part in the research. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Initials of the Participant _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Name of the Researcher _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Appendix-C
Information Sheet

Information Sheet

I, Ms. Ayesha Rai am the student of Bs Hons in Psychology at the Department of Applied Psychology, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore. You have been requested to take part in my research. Before taking part, it is necessary for you to know why this research study is being conducted and how is going to be beneficial. Please read the following information carefully.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to analyze the narratives of young gay men, regarding their identity formation in Pakistan.

What are you required to do?

If you intend to participate in this research, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After consent, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview regarding your experiences. I will audio record these interviews as well as take written notes of significant points. Each interview may take anywhere from 30 minutes to 120 minutes in each session. You may be asked for participation in single or multiple sessions.

What will be done of your responses?

Your responses would be recorded in audio form and all the information would be kept confidential and will only be used for academic and research purposes. All the information provided by you will be kept confidential.

Your Rights

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. If you are willing and you want to ask anything about the study, feel free to ask.

Complaints

In case of any complaints or queries, you may contact:

03339374443

raiaysha03@gmail.com

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix-D
Demographic Form

Demographic Form

Please note that all information will be kept confidential. To help the researcher gather basic information about you, please respond to the following demographic questions:

1. Do you identify as a cis-gender male (someone who was born male and identifies as male)?
 Yes
 No
2. What is your nationality?

3. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?
 Heterosexual
 Gay
 Bisexual
 Other
4. Have you taken people into confidence regarding your sexual orientation (such as family or friends)?
 Yes
 No
5. Religious Affiliation/Identity: _____
6. Age in Years: _____
7. Family income per month _____
8. Highest Education Level Completed: _____
9. Relationship status (please mark one):
 Single, Never Married
 Dating/Committed Relationship
 Domestic Partnership
 Married
 Divorced
 Widowed
10. Do you have any chronic health problems?
 Yes
 No
 If yes, what?

11. Do you have a personal in-depth/descriptive story related to your identity as a gay male that you would be willing to share with the researcher?
 Yes
 No

Appendix-E
Transcripts and Theme Roughwork

Appendix-F
Plagiarism Report



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