

EXHIBITION OF MASCULINITY AMONG MIGRANT MEN: PREDISPOSING FACTOR OF SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Masculinity has been recognized as a significant influence on risky sexual behavior. The migrant men present various sexual risk behaviors. The present study aims to explore migrant men's perspectives on the construction of masculinity and to understand their experiences and engagement in risky sexual behavior in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. This anthropological study included 14 focus group discussions with migrant men aged 18-45 years in the Commercial Market of Rawalpindi. The data were collected from the informal focus group discussions. The data were analyzed by using thematic inductive analysis presented by Clarke. The research results represent that masculine behavior among migrant men leads to risky sexual behavior. It was found that an autonomous living structure with peer groups and increased avenues of expression of sexual desire due to being away from families enhance the risky sexual behavior of migrant men. Such behaviors lead them to indulge in risky sexual practices with low-paid commercial sex workers or non-commercial partners, mostly without availing any protective measures. Furthermore, the normative behavior of migrant men, including peer pressure, economic independence, opportunity structure, and homogeneous population, were the significant factors that led to risky sexual behavior. The study suggests that such behavior remains an essential practice to conform to social expectations and norms aligned with masculinity in the Pakistani urban male population. Therefore, there is a need to address the gender norms that lead to masculine behavior among the migrant population.

Keywords: masculinity, risky sexual behavior, migrant men, peer pressure, real man, hegemonic masculinity.

INTRODUCTION

Masculinity and its associated risks in the context of Pakistan remain an understudied phenomenon. While studies around the globe have sought to present a multi-faceted perspective of masculinity (Jeff, et al., 2012), it is significant to study how urban male migrants in Pakistan seek to embody, reject, or negotiate masculinity (Coles, 2008) and thus present an alternative interpretation of this broader phenomenon. In the Punjabi (Pakistan) cultural context, masculinity encapsulates several distinct characteristics and norms that are associated with patriarchy and are directly related to women's suppression. These include sexual acts as well as aggressive, violent, and exploitative attitudes towards women (Mankyi, 2008) and other marginalized communities, as well as state mechanisms, religious and cultural responsibilities and sanctions (Chaudhary & Ijaz, 2003). Further, these acts serve to exert control over others' mobility, freedom and identities. Additionally, they prioritize possession and display of physical strength, heteronormativity and the performance of courage and violence. For many, heavy drinking and risky sexual behavior also act as a gesture of masculinity within the Muslim dominant Punjab (Pakistan) (Steve, 2007).

Furthermore, as already established, there is a multiplicity of masculinities (Coles, 2008) that are transformed through various cultural logics and ways of conceiving the world. Within multiple masculinities, as Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) convincingly suggest, "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) takes ascendancy and affects other types of masculinity, making men aim to emulate a "perfect" masculine behavior. "Hegemonic masculinity" develops on displays of power

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and dominance, and shapes people's attitude toward other sexualities and ways of relating with others. While it perpetuates gender inequality, it also allows many men to find a behavior that best represents their emotions, feeling, and understandings. Rachel & Morell (2012) have also suggested that hegemonic masculinity peaks the hierarchy of masculinities, allowing men to navigate their identities and ideals with power and dominance. Hence, masculinity is also associated with homosexuality as Srivastava and Roy (2011) suggest, masculinity is not only a relationship between male versus female but men versus men too. Other scholars have also highlighted the link between hegemonic masculinity and sexually proactive and other risky behaviors (Ngidi, et al., 2016) such as heavy drug and alcohol use, unprotected sex, and maintaining multiple sexual partners (Mahalik. R, et al., 2003).

Additionally, different gendered practices are usually linked with various health concerns. For example, an effort to conform to masculine ideals could have physical and mental health-related issues. Physically, this means the individual is vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In this way, an aspiration to embody masculinity could not only affects men's health but also their seeking behaviors. Feeling reluctance and *sharam* (shame) towards availing reproductive health services and seeking treatment for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is one such example. Mentally, an aspiration to masculinity could create an unattainable "ideal" situation for men, pursuit of which results in the constant remaking of mental and behavioral outlooks. Therefore, this paper maintains that to understand men's sexual and reproductive health-related issues, it is imperative to see the close socio-cultural ties with hegemonic masculinity. In this way, more well-informed interventions combatting sexually transmitted infections can be designed, and policy interventions can be made regarding strictly taboo topics such as men's sexuality.

A key lens to exploring such intertwinement between masculinity and men's health-related issues is migration- a term widely used to describe spatial movement from one location to another (Robert W, 1998). According to Tsang (2020), rural Chinese migrant men often compete with women for jobs and negotiate their masculinities through sexual behavior. While Tsang's analysis helps us reconstruct men's aspiration toward masculinities, it remains quite understudied how men avail commercial sexual services while navigating their daily lives. To address the dearth of research that has centered on the relationships between different types of masculinities and sexual behaviors of migrant men, this paper aims to understand the role of *mardangi* (manhood) and masculinity. It particularly explicates what it means to be a real *mard* while navigating through contesting sexual desires and stigmatization. In this way, this article provides an opportunity to understand the constructions of masculinities in the Pakistani migrants' cultural context.

METHODOLOGY

This paper builds on qualitative data drawn from focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted with migrant men aged 18-45 years in Rawalpindi. The men in the sample size were living away from their native place to engage in various livelihood practices. The research area was comprised of apartments in the suburbs of Commercial Market, Rawalpindi, a city in the province of Punjab in Pakistan. Here, the upper portions of the commercial plazas are available for people living without their families, who are usually not encouraged to live in areas where mostly only families reside. Most of the migrants lived in rented flats, mainly in shared housing with their peers and/or co-workers. They were financially independent, autonomous in decision making, and most openly stated during the informal discussion that they were exposed to social media, pornography, and peer pressure. While most of them were single, nearly one-third of these migrant men were married.

Fieldwork for this study was conducted from June 2021 to May 2022. Data for this research paper was extracted from 14 FGDs conducted to reveal the sexual risk behaviors that ultimately lead to contraction of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Each FGD involved about 6-8 men in an informal setting. The FGD questions centered on sexual behavior that keeps migrant men at risk of STIs. Based on the taboos that surround pre/extra-marital sexual intercourse in Pakistan, conducting FGDs was the best method in order to gather in-depth data on men and how their gender influences risky sexual

behavior. The FGDs also provided a communal perspective as opposed to individual perspectives that would have been insufficient in shedding light on societal beliefs and norms surrounding masculinity. The focus groups also proved to be an effective inductive approach towards generating data on activities such as sexual intercourse which render other methods such as participant observation not feasible. Moreover, studies around the globe have used FGDs in the study of femininity, masculinity and gender relations. For instance, a study based out of China conducted by (Maphalala, Khumalo, & Khumalo, 2021) as well as Richard, Powell, & Single (1996)'s analysis of the use of FGDS state that FGDs assist in gaining a detailed understanding of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes that is facilitated through interactions between participants themselves. Hence, this research is based on migrant's risky sexual behavior and as migrants are living as a community, so the use of FGDs as a method provided a detailed understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs.

Moreover, the participants also discussed knowledge and treatment-seeking of STIs and their influence on sexual behavior. In this research paper, the sexual behavior of migrant men was linked to migration, masculinity, and peer pressure. The objective of such questions was to explore men's perceptions of masculinity and their influence on sexual behavior that ultimately cause a risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. The FGDs were initially conducted in Urdu and later translated into English for analysis. To retain the cultural context, several words and phrases from regional languages have been reported in italics. Data was organized under multiple themes and subthemes in an excel spreadsheet. The analysis was undertaken through thematic coding. Overall, a grounded theory approach (inductive method) helped in the effective analysis of the qualitative data.

The Advanced Studies Research Board of Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad approved the study topic. Respondents were briefed about the study's objectives and topics and signed written informed consent forms. These detailed the voluntary nature of their participation and right to discontinue at any time. Furthermore, they were assured that any information they provided would be kept confidential and all personal data would be anonymized in the paper.

Study Area

In addition to being close to Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, Rawalpindi also offers a considerable job market and has several educational institutions. It annually attracts many people, mostly men, for work and education in the twin cities. Many who work in Islamabad prefer to stay in Rawalpindi because of the low-rental rates and affordable housing (Nayak, 2006). The majority of the migrants prefer to choose the suburbs of the Commercial Market in Rawalpindi due to comparatively cheap accommodation and frequent availability of public transportation facilities.

Objectives

This study primarily focuses on masculinity, migration and risky sexual behavior among migrant men in urban dwellings of Rawalpindi, Pakistan- an understudied group and topic in Pakistan. This study's aims include:

- To explore migrant men's perspectives on the construction of masculinity
- To analyze the experiences of migrant men and their engagement in risky sexual behavior
- To add to literature based on an ethnography of the nexus among masculinity, migration and risky sexual behavior

FINDINGS

The FGDs revealed several different aspects of how migrant men in Pakistani society aspire to achieve masculine ideals and what *mardangi*² looks like in Pakistan. Two key ideas are associated with masculinity: the first is power; the second is bravery in conjunction with societal respect. Men choose to display a manly persona through a variety of physical displays such as having a strong, muscular body, long hair, and mustaches (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Stereigel-Moore, 1986), switching up their body language, driving recklessly, and riding motorcycles one-wheeled.

² Masculinity

Participants frequently reported rash driving, drunkenness, substance abuse, and intercourse while under the influence of alcohol and drugs among the men of their community. These habits were found to be associated with risky sexual and general health behavior. Exceeding speed limits, driving while drunk or (in the case of motorcycles) without a helmet, and demonstrating skills such as driving on a single wheel were all described as typical male behaviors i.e., social representations of manhood and masculinity through which men seek attention and recognition from their peers. The FGDs elucidated that these young men often feel compelled to participate in dangerous sexual acts to display their masculinity and allegiance to a certain group.

"The majority of young guys in the Commercial Market of our neighborhood undertake one-wheeling and actions on their bikes to impress their peers and girls in their surroundings. As numerous young women enter the Commercial Market to shop, the young men brag in front of them about how fit they are. Many of them were injured in front of us, and the majority were arrested or fined heavily by the police, but they did it solely to show off their masculine spirits.

30 years old, unmarried men with 14 years of schooling.

Furthermore, the Station House Officer (SHO) of the police station near the research area spoke to the researcher about the fights among youth and incidents of one-wheeling in the area. He said these fights are common and many arrests of young men living in this area take place due to one wheeling and teasing women during shopping. These incidents increase on Fridays and before *Eids*³ when the rush for shopping increases in the Commercial Market and police are forced to ban male entry. He added that as a Station House Officer (SHO), he does not have any authority to punish or fine them, and the judicial system has failed to control such moral crimes.

Masculinity and Risky Sexual Behavior

One of our primary findings was the link between attempts to be masculine and engagement in risky sexual behavior including having multiple sexual partners, giving into peer pressure to engage with commercial sex workers, lack of use of protection during intercourse, and displays of aggressive sexual behavior, all that ultimately increase the risk of both contracting and spreading STIs.

Men desire to assert their control over women in sexual interactions as well as other everyday interactions in our predominately male society. One important feature of masculinity in Pakistani society is the display of men's sexual dominance over their spouses. They look for different ways to do it, sometimes even through committing sexual assault on women to demonstrate their masculine strength since they view them as an organism in sexual matters as well (Antai, 2011, pp. 5-6). Additionally, men also engage in expressing their sexual prowess and dominance by having successful sexual encounters in front of their peers or by flaunting their multiple sexual partners or female friends or detailing long sexual encounters in intimate male settings to their friends and peers.

Men do take a variety of measures to demonstrate their sexual dominance in front of their partners. To increase their sexual strength and demonstrate their sexual supremacy in front of their partners, males seek treatment from *hakims*⁴ and *quacks*⁵. To increase their sexual prowess, numerous men used medications like viagra, *afeem*⁶ and *charas*⁷ among others. Most people harm their kidneys and other vital organs by using steroid medications prescribed by unlicensed quacks and *hakims*.

*"A man is considered to be **mard**⁸ if he satisfies his female; otherwise, he is considered **namard**⁹."*

31 years old married man, 3 children, and 8 years of schooling.

³ Religious Festival

⁴ Traditional Healer

⁵ Non-Qualified Health Practitioners

⁶ Opium

⁷ Marijuana

⁸ Masculine, Sexually Powerful

⁹ Non-Masculine

"By engaging in multiple acts of intercourse during a single encounter or meeting, the young men demonstrate their physical strength and sexual power. They consume energizing meals, a lot of meat and vegetables, chicken, and eggs to grow their physique."

22 years old, unmarried man with 16 years of schooling.

A person is referred to as non-masculine if he cannot satisfy his sexual partner or leaves the bed too soon. In the event when a woman accuses a man of being *namard*, the male will consider it an issue of ego and seek treatment from different Hakeems, quacks, and doctors to regain his sexual prowess (Khan, et al., 2014).

About one-third of the respondents said that formerly, a man was thought to be masculine if he was physically strong, had a fighting spirit, and was courageous. However, now that the term has been associated with sexual power, a man is seen to be masculine if he is sexually powerful.

"Men proudly talk about their partners and sexual performance in front of their peers, which has increased the amount of extramarital sex. To improve their sexual performance, men also utilize a variety of illicit drugs, which is bad for their general health. The gendered concept of "masculinity" devalues women and increases sexual assault on them by employing drugs that make the sexual activity last longer. Men avoid wearing condoms because they want to experience as much sexual pleasure as possible, which raises the risk of STIs for both men and women."

28 years old, unmarried man with 10 years of schooling.

Some men display their masculinity by maintaining a sexual partner, whether they are a man or a woman. This idea is gendered-focused and closely associated with hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, they engage in anal and oral sex acts to display their masculinity and forbid women from using condoms to demonstrate the strength of their masculine dominance and to increase sexual satisfaction.

Peer pressure (masculine social pressure)

Peer pressure is another major factor influencing migrant men's risky sexual behavior and vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections (Mishra, 2004). According to participants in almost all focus groups, men who do not have extramarital sexual partners or girlfriends are referred to as *ranmureed*, *khusra*, *chutiya* (submissive to women, transgender, asshole) among friends. Men's unwillingness to modify their promiscuous behavior is mostly due to this aspect.

*"As a man, he feels he should have a female friend or a keep for extramarital sex since friends put pressure on him. They call him **runmureed**, **khusra**, **chutiya** if he doesn't have a female friend. Friends accuse him of being under the influence of his dominating wife."*

25 years old married man, no children, and 5 years of schooling.

Participants indicated that their peers would constantly talk about sex and even question them about their own sexual experiences. To fit in and feel part of the group, participants indicated feeling the need to engage in sexual activities. The pressure from their peers led some of these migrant men to conduct themselves in ways they would not ordinarily do when at home with their families. In their migrant context, however, not subscribing to these dominant masculine ideals would result in social disapproval and mocking from their peers.

"Most migrant males in their private settings, parks, and restaurants over a cup of tea here keep discussing their sexual encounters with their friends. Some of them are on dates with their female friends, so you'll be alone, and you will have sex since everyone else does too, and they'll even ask whether you've had sex...you'll need to have something to say. Things aren't the same here as they are at home."

27 years old, unmarried man with 12 years of schooling.

Young men who choose to be faithful, whether driven by their morals or the necessity to protect their health, are frequently ridiculed and harassed by their peers. Thus, conforming to social pressures, for the study's participants, was a way of being accepted as a *mard* "real man".

Participants from two FGDs reported several sexual activities of young migrant men, including visiting sex workers, especially *hijra*¹⁰ sex workers along the sides of roads such as Murree Road and on express highways. These young men also visit sex workers in groups as a common form of homosocial bonding and fraternity. After such sexual encounters, migrant men feel proud to share their experiences of sex and alcohol use in their peer groups to express their masculinity.

"In private settings, men describe their sexual encounters with their partners. They express their sexual power by describing the size of their genital organ and sexual encounters with their sex partners. They also describe the different methods of sex (oral, anal, or vaginal) engaged in with their extramarital sexual partners. Cultural concerns limit discussions about their marital sexual partners. These discussions are just to show off their sexual power and manhood."

25 years old, unmarried man with 5 years of schooling

It was also observed that the migrants mostly discussed how their participation in these sexual encounters was also tied to maintaining class-based masculinity in front of their peers. Their sense of *ghairat*¹¹ is also elevated upon sharing their extramarital sexual activities with their peers and exerting dominance over those men who have been unable to initiate sexual relations outside of their marriages. As a result, these men put on a show of success by spending relatively large sums on availing of commercial sex even though they can scarcely afford it. Purchasing of commercial sex, therefore, shows off extravagant consumption, simply because men feel pressure to conform to the norms of the new group identity they now aspire to embody i.e. of a masculine, migrant man.

*"Men in this single living society (migrant) have sexual intercourse with several partners not because their wives do not satisfy them, but because there are other factors like that when they sit with friends and discuss the desire for sex that sex is as vital as food. They need extramarital sexual relations because they live away from their wives. Most males in this group proudly share their extramarital encounters with their peers, and it is regarded as a symbol of *mardangi*."*

30 years old married man, 2 children and 5 years of schooling.

Multiple Sexual Partners

Multiple sexual partners are seen as an indication of *mardangi*, especially when men live independently away from their families and homes. Most respondents expressed that having multiple sexual partners is seen as a way for men to demonstrate their manliness, which is often linked to unrestrained sexual desire. Migrant men living independently are considered sexually autonomous particularly for engaging in multiple and simultaneous sexual partnerships, despite knowing that such actions make them more vulnerable to contracting STIs. In such an environment away from their homes and families, however, they have exposure, opportunities, and peer pressure to engage in extramarital sex. They feel pushed to expand their sexual networks due to their economic independence, easy access to extramarital sexual opportunities, and desire to fit in with and impress their peer group.

Some men also stated that having multiple girlfriends and sexual intercourse with multiple partners or even engaging in extramarital sex is a requisite for manhood and to be seen as a *mard*. In this manner, they can also engage in sexual acts that are otherwise impossible to do with their wives.

"One can't do sexual tricks with his wife or expect her to satisfy him through oral or anal sex. Sex workers don't have any objection towards performing any sort of sexual activity because they are concerned about the money."

42 years old married man, 6 children, and 10 years of Schooling

Those who have many female friends or have sexual relationships with multiple partners are lauded by their peers.

¹⁰ Transgender

¹¹ Pride, Honour

*"A **mard** is a man who has multiple sexual partners and can maintain a prolonged duration of sexual intercourse while sexually satisfying his partner. Men with multiple sexual partners are seen as having "more sexual strength" by peers who encourage and celebrate this fact. These men are delighted to express their sexual power and sexual encounters with their friends. They will be considered as masculine when they demonstrate having had long durations of sexual intercourse and sexual strength."*

26 years old, unmarried man with 16 years of schooling.

Respondents also mentioned customs of showing affection for a girlfriend in public such as roaming around with them. Men mostly roam around with their girlfriends when they want to cause a ruckus among their friends or prove their loyalty to a woman by displaying that he is not cheating on her or is engaged to someone else. However, this practice is not common with their girlfriends in their hometowns because there are different norms for expressing masculinity there versus where they migrate to.

"You see people kissing, hugging, and holding hands with girls in public places and parks. It's something that only happens here unlike when you go back home. At home, you tend to be reserved. It is not something that you can just do, you need to respect people and you just can't be walking around with a girl."

20 years old, unmarried man with 5 years of schooling.

This statement highlights two issues in terms of the link between masculinities and social expectations and norms. The first one is that a man is expected to show a public display of his masculinity by having a girlfriend. The second is the autonomy that a man can enjoy when he is away from his home which facilitates establishing extramarital relations. This results in migrant men leading "double lives" as they live rooted within these social norms, with a specific narrative on different acceptable behaviors within their peers and back in their native homes.

"Here is an independent world in which men shape their everyday lives according to the demands of the time. Their clothing, diet, and daily routine are not the same as when they lived in their hometown. They usually have one or more sexual partners depending on their desires. The majority of them are financially independent and have sex with commercial sex workers which they can find easily through their ipeers and social media."

28 years old married man, 2 children, and no schooling.

According to participants of the FGDs, women in Pakistani society are less autonomous and appear to compromise with their husbands' extramarital affairs due to economic deprivation, restricted mobility, and little involvement in formal occupations. When men are financially independent, they are more likely to engage in extramarital sex, putting them at risk of sexually transmitted infections. Women, on the other hand, are unable to bargain with their husbands for safe sex and the use of a condom to protect them from the risk of STIs due to a male-dominated economy and lack of independence for women.

*"Financial independence and peer pressure further facilitate the pre-existing opportunity structure that enables migrants living away from their families to engage in extramarital sex. At private gatherings with friends, young unmarried men talk about the number of their extramarital lovers and their love stories to establish their **mardangi**."*

23 years old, unmarried man with 14 years of schooling.

However, it was also discussed during one of the focus groups that migrant men's wives often engage in extramarital affairs to satisfy their sexual desires because they are also separated from their husbands. Another explanation offered was that their husbands put them in financial distress by spending their money on extramarital affairs and drinking. As a result, migrant men's aspirations toward masculine behavior and indulgence in extramarital sex, with both commercial and non-commercial

sexual partners, compel their wives to indulge in their own extramarital affairs, thus increasing the risk of spread of STIs to the general public.

"Women who are away from their husbands for an extended period engage in sexual relations with other men to fulfill their sexual desires."

40 years old married man, 4 children, and no schooling.

"Today's women want their spouses to give them money, and when they don't, they stop seeing their husbands as men, so they look for men who will financially support them. Men of our community are in danger of contracting sexually transmitted infections since condom use is still so rare in extramarital sex."

28 years old married man, 3 children and, 5 years of schooling.

Furthermore, in Pakistani culture, *mardangi* is an esteemed value, whereas women must practice self-control. This shows that heterosexual male sexuality is more valued, whereas women are subjected to arbitrary shame. Men, too, have varied standards when it comes to picking their sexual partners. For example, they prefer having extramarital sexual relations with women who are more attractive and sexually experienced, while they prefer virgins for married sexual relations.

*"Men prefer a woman with more physical attraction as a girlfriend and they prefer a girl who has never had sex and wears **parda**¹² as a wife."*

21 years old, unmarried man with 10 years of schooling.

While migrant men posited several different reasons for engaging in multiple sexual partnerships, a contrasting image was seen between sexual promiscuity as a requisite part of masculinity versus as a basis for degrading women. It was mentioned that a woman who has multiple sexual partners is disgraced and is referred to with various derogatory names such as *gashti*, *randi*, and *taxi* (**prostitute/adulteress**) but also names that are used for passive male sex workers were also highlighted like *bando*, *ghora*, *movesia* (*passive sex worker*), etc. Women were accused of sexually provoking and attracting men by exposing their bodies. Migrant men's thinking is heavily rooted in gender stereotypes, as seen by the following perceptions.

*"Mostly men have sex with their girlfriends to show off their masculinity and to meet their sexual desires. But women themselves are also responsible for attracting men by wearing provocative dresses. On evenings and weekends, mostly men roam around in Commercial Market because dozens of girls come in such vulgar dressing that we **charray** (single men) get attracted and this becomes a corridor for attraction to extramarital sexual relations."*

26 years old, unmarried man with no schooling.

Some of the men, however, appear to be conscious of the double standards that exist in society when it comes to gender interactions. They even discussed the benefits that men derive from extramarital sexual relationships, as well as how harsh society is towards women. Such gendered double standards of sexual behaviors emphasize the hegemony and the social expectations and norms for men and women.

*"In our culture, a man can have multiple extramarital sexual partners, and he usually flaunts these accomplishments to his peers. Contrarily, a woman who has several sexual partners or extramarital affairs is stigmatized in society. Such a woman is referred to as **randi**, **gashti**, **kanjri**, and **zani** (slut/whore/adulteress). Women in our culture have a social obligation to prove their virginity at the time of marriage, and many divorces are based on this issue, but men have no such obligation."*

28 years old married man, with 3 children, and 12 years of schooling.

Non-protective sexual behavior

¹² Veil

Even though they are living in shared housing with their colleagues and friends away from their families, most of these migrant men rarely use their accommodations for extramarital sexual activities to save face in the community. As a result, they engage in sex in brothels, cars, friends' spaces, and green belts on the side of the road late at night. For those who can afford it, hotel rooms and guest houses are used as well. However, such spaces are vulnerable to police raids, and any condoms found are utilized as evidence in courts during the proceedings of legal cases. This, therefore, discourages them from using condoms during their illicit affairs. Secondly, these men do not keep condoms with them because these sexual encounters are not usually preplanned.

"It is purely unplanned with commercial sex workers, and it is impossible to arrange condoms in such unplanned sexual encounters."

26 years old, unmarried man with 10 years of schooling.

Moreover, during one FGD, it was also mentioned that commercial sex workers do not allow men to wear condoms because they want to deal with their clients quickly so they can deal with the next ones. The results of a study on sexual risk-taking among homeless young people in Pakistan (Aftab , Iqbal , Asghar , & Noor, 2021, pp. 3-5) were comparable. Additionally, the researcher met with *hijra* prostitutes located across the road on a well-known Islamabad express highway near the research premises. When questioned if their clients used condoms during intercourse, they stated that they engage in sex in the green belt across the road and that in situations where men want sex on the way, the availability of condoms is the key concern.

"Sahib Jee¹³, we charge 200 Rupees per short to clients. How can we provide condoms which cost 100 Rupees to our clients? Our clients don't keep condoms with themselves."

A hijra commercial sex worker.

Even though several participants highlighted the prevention of sexually transmitted infections such as through condoms, the concept of risk was mostly related to the possibility of pregnancy through extramarital sexual partners rather than to contracting any STIs. Similarly, the question of whether to use a condom was frequently tied to the distinction between being in a long-term relationship versus being with an occasional companion.

"The benefits of having a sexual partner for a short period outweighed the dangers of contracting sexually transmitted infections."

21 years old married man, with no children, and 8 years of schooling.

"Despite having sufficient knowledge about risky sexual behaviors as a result of media and social media, condom use is seen to solely protect pregnancy during extramarital relations with a girlfriend, and in the case of sex workers who want to use condoms. Mostly, however, men deny using condoms because they are more concerned about their sexual pleasure. This behavior is also used by men to display their masculine supremacy. During paid extramarital sex, the main issue is the loss of pleasure. Nobody is asked for consent [regarding condom use] only the man has the rights and the will. If he wants to take preventive measures, then he does. If not, only his wish is followed."

26 years old, unmarried man with 12 years of schooling.

Condom use was also linked to a decrease in sexual pleasure during intercourse, whereas not using them was linked to an increase in confidence in an intimate relationship. According to some of these men, their sexual desire was so overpowering that they were not concerned about the use of condoms. Additionally, among the peer group, having unprotected intercourse was considered a sign of manhood, and this was sometimes used as an additional reason for not using a condom.

¹³ Gentleman

*"When a man meets a girl for sex, he will not run to get condoms, even if she is a **gashiti** (commercial sex worker) who may be at risk of contracting an STI . . . these men don't refuse anything. Whenever they get the opportunity, they have a simple formula: '**pakro tey ragro**' (don't miss the opportunity). They never say no to having sex."*

19 years old, unmarried man with 10 years of schooling.

However, when displaying their masculine strength in front of women, men would use condoms to prolong the duration of their sexual encounters.

"Most men associate being a man with having honor, therefore they use numerous actions to demonstrate their dominance over women and try to satisfy their sexual partners."

41 years old married man, 5 children, and 10 years of schooling.

Masculinity and Oppressive Work Environments

Another major theme that was discussed across four focus groups centered on the perceived difficulties in the work lives of men due to the expanding trend of more career options for women in recent years. Most men and women work together in various offices and institutions in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. This shared working atmosphere creates a vacuum for sexual harassment and sexual engagement (Roscigno, 2019) (Munir Moosa, 2013). However, in the current situation, the participants perceived women as more powerful when they occupy executive or administrative roles, while men are oppressed in such work environments. As a result, men believe that there are fewer chances for them to grow in their professions.

To combat their purported oppression at their workplace, men are motivated to act aggressively and demonstrate their masculinity and sexual desire (for example, Yuk-ha Tsang, E. 2020) in other contexts, such as by having extramarital affairs. This extramarital sexual activity allows migrants to exhibit their masculinity and support the development of their self-confidence and self-esteem.

The majority, if not all, of the respondents, revealed that they indulge in extramarital sexual activities as a relief from the pressures placed on them by their job environments. These men temporarily dissociate themselves from their underappreciated occupations by engaging in these extramarital sexual activities for the sake of mental relaxation. They feel cognitive reinforcement of their manhood in addition to physical pleasure.

Aggressive and Violent Masculinity

The majority of FGD respondents proudly described aggressive masculinity or macho masculinity. As stated earlier, migrant men who work with women in different offices largely view themselves as submissive and obedient. Participants reported that to make up for their loss of masculinity, they have violent sex with their partner outside of the workplace. Due to the access to pornography and suppression of sexual desire, while working under the supervision of women, they find rough sex to be more appealing because of their brewed anger. They see sex workers as objects of pleasure rather than potential partners. To display dominant masculinity, rough sexual behavior and sadomasochism were frequently mentioned. They stated a preference to engage in wild and harsh sexual intercourse rather than adopting gentler methods. The most common behaviors associated with sex were aggression, coercion, machismo, and active suppression of emotions. Most of the male migrants used the term "sexual aggressiveness" to refer to a man who constantly disparages female sex workers.

"Most men who have extramarital sex do it cruelly and angrily. They have oral and anal sex, do striptease and touch their sexual partners roughly. Sometimes, during aggression, they pour wine on them as well and this is all to overcome their frustrations."

24 years old, unmarried man with 14 years of schooling.

Many study participants did not discuss gender violence much but mentioned the violence that men use to display their *mardangi*, which they largely observed in their surroundings. Most men stated that they were against using violence. However, given the cultural context of this study population of

men living away from their families in a highly patriarchal society, it was commonly observed and performed.

Additionally, most of the respondents described several confrontations between men near the research area of Rawalpindi's Commercial Market. These were largely about ego, establishing supremacy and gaining respect as well as displaying their masculinity or domination among their peers. This fighting would begin over concerns such as staring or hooting at girls, minor traffic, or parking violations and escalate into physical street fights after a short conversation. In this way, violent behavior was linked to the idea of protection and honor, attributes closely tied to their understanding of masculinity.

Alcohol and Drug use

Additionally, participants' statements about substance and alcohol use were dominated by the fact that this was very common in their community. Most respondents said that drinking alcohol is a typical pastime and that most men use these substances while having sex to boost sexual pleasure by increasing the duration of intercourse, another factor associated with masculinity.

Some respondents, however, expressed opposition to the consumption of alcohol, stating that they were in favor of avoiding alcohol and remaining responsible. They were aware of the health risks of alcohol abuse and the financial risks of being away from their native homes for the sake of earning. It was also reported that alcohol is religiously and culturally prohibited, and that it is not widely available, but that men in their society drink excessively precisely due to these restrictions.

"Many men who reside in the Commercial Market suburb drink because they are economically self-sufficient and wine is readily available, even though it is legally and religiously prohibited. However, we can see that it is being sold under the supervision of appropriate authorities in this case. Many drunk men can be seen sitting in the park with their partners or even driving."

23 years old, unmarried man with 9 years of schooling.

In addition, many participants felt that the usage of harmful substances including *afeem*, *viagra*, *charas*, and steroids was widespread in their neighborhood and was growing daily. To enhance their sexual pleasure and demonstrate their *mardangi* to their partners, men mostly used these drugs during extramarital sex.

*"The majority of men who engage in extramarital sex use alcohol and other narcotics to extend the duration of their sexual encounters. They use opium and other *kushtas* (narcotics) even when they have sex with their wives. This is to demonstrate their masculinity to their sexual partner while also receiving sexual pleasure. Hakims and quacks usually load the capsules with opium and administer them to increase the frequency of intercourse. Most hakims and quacks in our area make their living by selling these medications to young people."*

20 years old, unmarried man with 10 years of schooling.

Physical Display of Masculinity

One of the less frequently, albeit still important findings is the emphasis on physicality. Our findings suggest that when migrant men want to improve their body image, they prioritize muscular development. Muscles were seen as a major component of the purported masculine subjectivity within our study population, particularly as a part of symbol of power, strength, and attraction.

"The majority of the young men in the area join gyms to get stronger, and in the evenings, when the girls come to the market for shopping and other daily routine activities, these guys wander around in tight shirts to show off their muscles. Fights over baseless concerns are usually started by young males with strong muscles."

18 years old, unmarried man with 10 years of schooling.

Moreover, a key theme of the discussion was sexual desire. While some men justified it with a biological viewpoint by using the words like instinct, spirit, or nature, others stated that these ideas are socially constructed and that men are more prone to express their sexual desires than women. While

such directness is a sign of manhood, women in Pakistani culture are supposed to be careful regarding the expression of their sexual desire due to cultural taboos and moral restrictions.

Additionally, a few of the respondents also narrated that an impotent man or a man with weak sexual potency who is unable to satisfy his woman is perceived as effeminate or *namard*. Such men usually do not share their sexual problems in front of peer groups as sexual impotency is seen in direct opposition to masculine ideals. Hegemonic masculinity lauds men for their sexual prowess, having multiple sexual partnerships and exerting sexual dominance over women. A respondent said:

"A namard is he who cannot perform sexually and is unable to satisfy his woman. Men who suffer from premature ejaculation are also namard."

24 years old, unmarried man with 12 years of schooling.

Social Determinants of Masculinity

Masculinity, as seen in the context of Pakistani migrants, consists of several different determinants. Whereas the major findings of the study have been elucidated above in regard to risky sexual behavior, the FGDs also revealed other factors related to masculinity. These include financial stability and independence, the ability to provide for one's family and educational attainment.

A key indicator of ascribing properly to masculinity is seen through financial strength. Findings suggest that to be considered a *mard* (a real man), one must assume economic responsibility for the family. Not having a job or a source of income may generate embarrassment for a man because it can be seen as a sign of inability to carry out basic socio-cultural duties, including an obligation to one's children (Affleck, Thamotharampillai, Jayakumar, & Whitley, 2018). Hence, a man remaining unemployed for a longer period is viewed as *nikamma* (useless) and is categorized as *mai* (women).

"A Mard in our society works hard to feed his wife and children. The sound financial status of men determines their social status in society. When a woman works for her children's survival in our culture, it hurts men's ego as this is the primary responsibility of men."

22 years old, unmarried man with 10 years of schooling.

In addition, higher education also seems to be part of the new values defining manhood since it is seen as giving men greater social status in the community. This is significant because education is viewed as key to greater economic mobility. Some respondents also highlighted moral values such as honesty, social responsibility, and being a role model for children, which are also understood as important defining elements of manhood.

Moreover, only a few men associated honor, courage, and power with masculinity. The remaining participants (both married and unmarried) linked this notion with "sexual power". The following quotes reflect the basic understanding of masculinity among the participants.

"A masculine man is he who can have sex for a longer duration and can satisfy his partner."

"A masculine man is he who can produce children."

"A masculine man is he who has a big and strong sexual organ."

Furthermore, as studies abroad have shown, men must have material assets to gain respect in their community (Nilan, Demartoto, & Broom, 2013). Likewise, in the Pakistani cultural context, material assets are related to a particular, respected, and honorable place within the community. However, a few respondents during the FGDs did describe a *mard* as someone who has a large family consisting of male offspring rather than prioritizing possession of worldly belongings.

"A real man is not financially stable. A true man is a father of many male children and has a strong body and a long mustache."

31 years old married man, 2 children and no schooling.

The importance of maintaining one's lineage is traditionally seen as a man's responsibility in a patrilineal society. Whereas participants shared the view that money provides power through increasing

access to resources, particularly economic goods, and social prestige, they also agreed that money does not define a real man. Instead, a major characteristic defining *mardangi* is the ability to father children, particularly sons. Some respondents also stated that a female child does not have the same worth as a male child since, in the patriarchal society women do not carry on the family lineage though they bear the role of conceiving men's male children. These attitudes appear to have a significant impact on gender relations and consequent disparities.

Having children not only gives men a certain sense of pride in being able to procreate, a symbol of virility (Brown, 1954) but it also gives them social status, which, in turn, leads to community recognition. During the focus groups, it became clear that the pressing need to acquire or achieve such attributes appears to be more for societal than individual reasons since it is vital to be acknowledged by the community as a *mard*.

*"In our culture, the men who don't have children are called different names such as **autra** or **nikhatra** (childless or without male children). He neither has respect nor social security in the later years of his life."*

43 years old married man, 5 children, and 7 years of schooling.

Masculinity and Women's Honor

One-third of the respondents felt that the idea of masculinity was not just associated with sexual strength and prowess and instead linked it to having good morals, being respected in society, and possessing courage and integrity. By having more kids, staying devoted to more partners for longer periods, and indulging in stronger sexual activity, they also demonstrate their manly strength. Additionally, due to the egocentric nature of our society, people associate masculinity with honor, bravery, and pride. Particularly, men risk their lives to protect their women's honor.

Most of the literature suggests that *zan, zar, and zameen* (women, wealth and land) are associated with masculine power and women are considered as a source of evil (Parveen & Gavino, 2008). Some participants did however link masculine power as something positive especially in regards to battling over women and lands. Although such fights, locally referred to as "fights of honor" are extrajudicial acts regarded as crimes under Pakistani law, they are widespread in Pakistani culture. Men use these fights as yet another point of display of power and dominance over women among friends and peers.

DISCUSSION

This research focused on migrant men's narratives on the construction and expression of masculinity and its link to risky sexual behavior. Ultimately, it aimed to highlight modes through which migrants are at risk of contracting and spreading sexually transmitted infections. Literature from studies based abroad suggests that migration causes a thriving and powerful sex industry, which emerges across socioeconomic strata to meet the sexual needs of the large number of migrant males who have traveled for employment and are living away from their hometowns (Ward & Aral, 2006). Similarly, this study's findings revealed that migrant men are highly vulnerable to risky sexual behavior as living independently with a homogenous group increases the avenues of engaging in extramarital and multiple sexual relationships. Furthermore, the research findings show that masculinity and *mardangi* for many migrant men in Rawalpindi are constructed through various stereotypical attributes related to "hegemonic masculinity" as discussed by Connell & Messerschmitt (2006). Many migrant men wished to embody an image of a physically and sexually aggressive man who disregards women's preferences and emotions, engages in risky behaviors, and ascribes to notions of establishing multiple sexual partnerships as opposed to monogamy.

Furthermore, according to findings, men assert masculine control over women in sexual interaction as well as in daily interaction in a predominately patriarchal society such as Pakistan. Likewise, norms associated with patriarchal superiority over women promote sexual aggression in men, which further creates another avenue for the expression of masculinity. Our findings reveal that

migrants' risky sexual behavior in Rawalpindi, Pakistan is also highly influenced by a cultural masculinity doctrine as seen through other work abroad as well (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009).

Similarly, the effort to become a *mard* was greatly influenced by the socio-cultural construction of masculinity that included social interaction with peers and engaging in behaviors mired in physical danger, aggression, and health risk to both the men and their sexual partners.

Furthermore, to demonstrate sexual supremacy and sexual strength over women, our data reveal that men seek treatment from *hakims* and *quacks* and use various locally available drugs to enhance their sexual capability and ability. As a result, the findings show that men get involved in sexual coercion for anal and oral sex, machismo, wild and harsh sexual intercourse including sexual assault, especially under the influence of such drugs taken to increase the duration of the intercourse.

As the study shows, *mardangi* and masculinity as understood in the larger global context greatly intersect, however, local customs and lived experiences also inform how men in Pakistan, specifically migrants in Rawalpindi view masculinity and the means they use to ascribe to it. Firstly, living away from the common tradition of joint families allows men to create their networks in their new locations, away from parental and spousal influence. Secondly, local terms and native language used to describe men who are not in the *mard* category, pit these "real men" against women as well as *khwaja siras* (*Transgender*) who have their own cultural identity as well. In addition to aggressive actions, men also use aggressive language and curse words that are made to assert that *namard* men do not conform to what real men are: cisgendered, heterosexual, economically stable, promiscuous individuals who dominate women and engage in law-breaking behaviors. Especially as migrant men, they have set up their own circles, dwelling areas, areas of entertainment and sexual gratification, as well as a distinct, but not entirely dissimilar, set of social beliefs and norms.

In the context of the religious and legal prohibition on extramarital sexual relations as well as sex being an extremely culturally contested topic, it is possible that the respondents were not entirely open about their experiences. Conversely, to portray themselves as embodying masculine ideals, especially in a group discussion, they may have exaggerated their sexual encounters. However, the results of this study remain significant since masculinity in the context of Pakistan, especially linked to migrants and the highly controversial topic of sexual relations is greatly understudied. Secondly, the study population comprising primarily of migrant men is also vital to study as these findings can help in improving healthcare not only for migrants but also for men, especially those who are vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted infections. Previous research shows that men in Pakistan who use drugs to enhance their sexual power seek help from *hakims* and quacks are suffering from psychosexual disorders. These unlicensed and unprofessional healers attract the vulnerable patients through great advertising and eventually profit from their supposed care that actually poses a health hazard for these men.

Our findings also do not suggest masculinity solely as an expression of power on women, but reveal the socio-cultural context of masculinity which according to some participants, also provides shelter and protection to women. Here, a true masculine male protects the women from other men's evil eye. In terms of land and property distribution, men also seek to help women. Men also spend their earnings and savings on the women by performing culturally ascribed and achieved roles in relation to women as sons, fathers, brothers, and husbands.

CONCLUSION

This research was carried out to understand how masculinity, in the context of migration and urban dwelling in Pakistan, creates the opportunity structure for risky sexual behavior among migrants in Rawalpindi. Data for this research paper was extracted from 14 FGDs conducted to reveal the sexual risk behaviors that ultimately lead them to contract STIs. In this regard, the findings reveal that men's behavior is determined by culturally constructed notions of masculinity. An autonomous living style with peer groups and increased avenues of expression of sexual desire due to being away from families lead these migrant men to increasingly engage in sexual activities. Similarly, working under women's

supervision further increases aggression among men. Ultimately, this new lifestyle leads the migrant men to indulge in various forms of risky sexual behavior with cheap commercial sex workers or non-commercial partners, mostly without availing any protective measures.

While trying to navigate this new environment and peer pressure, many men downplayed the protection of their sexual partners as necessary and instead strived to achieve masculine (and risky) sexual fulfillment by disregarding the use of appropriate protective measures. This does not mean that the FGD participants were unaware of the dangers of STIs and HIV. Despite this knowledge, their sexual behavior remains unchanged. They cited drug abuse in the area as a factor influencing their risky behavior as well as engaging in inexpensive sexual services from *hijras* and commercial sex workers wandering around the research area (Commercial Market, Rawalpindi and Murree Road, Rawalpindi). The paper suggests that such behavior remains an important practice in order to conform to social expectations and norms aligned with masculinity in the Pakistani urban male migrant context.

Ultimately, as these findings demonstrate, multiple forms of masculinities exist-ones that are formed by location, group influences, financial status, and largely sexual desire, that culminate to form their sense of self.

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