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Challenges to Socioeconomic Empowerment of Transgender Communities in Lucknow: A Case Study

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Abstract

From the ancient times the society of India has acknowledged only two genders, which are, male and female and the population which do not belong to these two genders, commonly known as transgender remained the ignored and uncared part of the society. The transgender community in India continues to face multiple forms of social, economic, and institutional exclusion despite constitutional recognition and legal safeguards. This study aims to identify the different socio-economic barriers that are faced by transgenders in Lucknow city that hinders their socio-economic development. The study is based on the primary data collected from 200 transgenders using snowball sampling technique. The findings highlight low educational attainment, engaged in informal occupational settings, undignified jobs and having lower to moderate earnings. The study indicates a significant gap between existing government laws and policies and the actual security of transgender people. A large proportion of the respondents have reported experiencing discrimination, violence and physical assault in accessing basic amenities. The study recommends to give reservation to transgender community in formal occupational opportunities, free training and skill development classes and to make separate legislation to protect them from violence and harassment, to promote the socio-economic empowerment of transgender persons.

Keywords: Transgender rights; Gender identity; Social exclusion; Violence and safety; Legal gaps

Introduction:

Transgender (TG) is a term that generally describe them who infringe norms of the society regarding gender. From the ancient times the society of India has acknowledged only two genders, which are, male and female and the population which do not belong to these two genders, commonly known as transgender remained the ignored and uncared part of the society. Transgender people encounter innumerable suffering and distress from their childhood. Persistent occurrence of these adversities leads to a poor quality of life. This study will bring into view the socio-economic status of the transgender.

Social status of the transgender:

The Supreme Court of India has passed a remarkable judgment in April 2014 which states that sexual orientation of any individual is a fundamental trait or chunk of their personality, dignity, and freedom. It identified transgender as the third gender. In the National Legal Services Authority (The Rights of Transgender Bill was passed by Rajya Sabha in, 2014), by making some amendments in the 2014 bill like abolishing (Jain, 2022; Mahanta & Shukla, 2015) the provisions and amenities relating to Transgender Rights Court in addition to the National and State Commissions. Additionally, modifications were also made in the 2015 Bill and a further bill was presented in the Lok Sabha (2016) – the transgender people (Protection of Rights Bill), that asked for condemnation and evaluation from the transgender people and other activists.

Economic status of the transgender:

In India, most of the transgender people work in the informal spheres as a sex worker or as a street beggar. Only few of them, fortunately find work at Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or other such places (Straubinger et al., 2023). The “Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill” (Balu, 2020) was passed in 2019, that act as an equal rights policy which acts as an anti – 6 discriminatory tool which tends to enhance and boost the position of transgenders in manpower and academics. Although the intentions were well, neither the bill passed in 2014 judgment nor the bill passed in 2019 has been carried out or implemented well. Both have proved to be ineffective in improving the financial and social status of transgenders. The management still ill-treat and exploited the transgender employees. Behaviour towards the Transgenders (Bhattacharya et al., 2022) who work as sex workers is terrible, cruel and ruthless. Opportunities for their economic mobility and social climbing are scarce.

Literature review:

The total number of transgender people or population in India is 4.88 lakh Census (2011). The National Human Rights Commission (2018) study shows that 96% of transgender people are denied jobs and are forced to do undignified work like sex workers, begging etc. or accept low paying jobs for their livelihood. Revathi (2015) reveals the actual pain and suffering that a transgender experiences throughout due to the intersection of caste, class, gender, generation, region and patriarchies and also claims that to understand the transgender community, one must analyse this intersectionality. WHO (2015) issued a guideline to be applied throughout the world including India that no medical or otherwise discrimination should to be done to any transgender person. Jaddidi and Sharma (2021) stated in their study that in Indian societies the transgender is the most forgotten and deprived section and it faces most discrimination and violence as compared to other genders. Mondal (2022) demanded that the government of India should give reservation to the transgender community in government jobs because if they do not have jobs, no one is going to feed them. In an interview published in *Bharata Bharati*, Tripathi (n.d.) highlights that the saddest thing is that people who have been given the status of demigod in our great civilisation are begging on the streets and also said that the clap is the only weapon of the transgender. Pathak (2019) depicts a story of friendship in a children’s book *Friends under the Summer Sun*, between Nimmi, a child and her neighbour Shri portraying a positive and safe relationship between a transgender adult and a child, thereby promoting inclusivity and social acceptance from an early age.

Objectives of the study:

- To study the social and economic status of transgender.
- To study socio- economic barriers faced by transgender.
- To suggest some measures for empowerment of transgender.

Research methodology:

This study is to identify the different problems that are faced by transgender in Indian society which act as a barrier in their socio – economic development. This study is conducted by the researcher in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The area of study is Lucknow as most of the Transgenders migrate to urban areas in for livelihood. Hence, the accessibility or the availability of Transgenders is greater in urban areas like Lucknow as compared to the interior parts of the state. Since the information regarding the accurate locality of Transgender people is not adequate, the researcher has used snowball sampling technique. The investigation began from a known transgender and then from every other transgender the researcher obtained the contact of other respondent (transgender) who also resides in Lucknow. The study surveyed 200 transgender respondents using primary data collection. The researcher has also used various published secondary data from government reports, newspaper, research papers and books.

Results and Discussion:

The analysis of this study is presented in this section with help of graphs. It is organized into four parts: (a) Demographics (b) Education (c) Economic Status (d) Social Barriers.

a) Demographics

This section contains two figures (figure 1 and figure 2) showing the proportion of transgender man and woman in the study and the age when they recognized their gender identity.

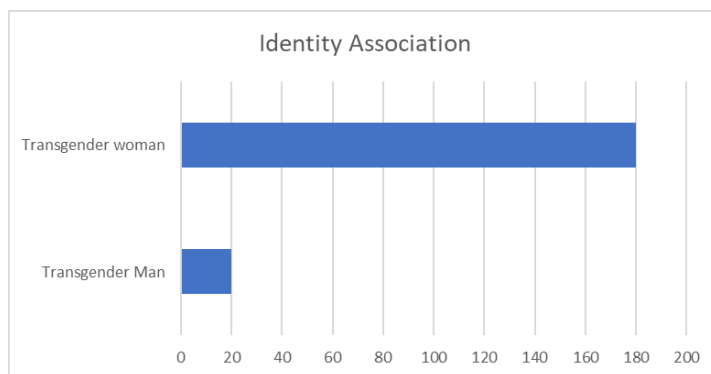


Figure 1. Identity distribution of transgender respondents (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

As shown in figure 1, 90% of the respondents i.e. 180 are transgender woman and 10% i.e. 20 respondents are transgender man. This distribution of proportion of transgender man and woman is important for a clear understanding of the study.

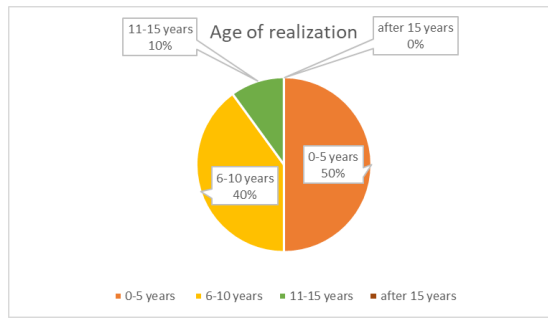


Figure 2. Age at which respondents realized their gender identity (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

As shown in Figure 2, 50% that is 100 respondents realised their gender identity at the age between 0 – 5 years, and 40 % at the age group of 6=10 years. It reveals that all the respondents have realised their gender identity before becoming an adult i.e. 18 years of age.

b) Education

This section focuses on the identifying the educational status of the transgenders. It helps in understanding the barriers in accessing education and impact on empowerment. This section contains two figures (figure 3 and figure 4) highlighting the educational qualification of transgenders and transgender drop outs.

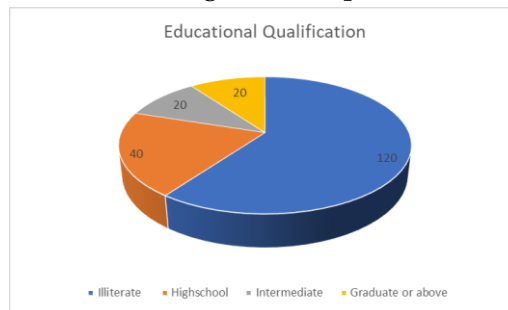


Figure 3. Educational qualifications of transgender respondents (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

From the figure 3, we can conclude that a major portion of the respondent i.e. 120 out of 200 respondents is illiterate and only 10% i.e. 20 respondents are intermediate and also only 10% are graduate or above. It is showing the educational backwardness of the transgenders. Figure 3, reveals that accessing education is not an easy task for the transgender people.

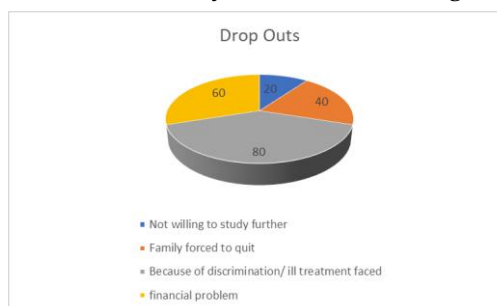


Figure 4. Reasons for dropping out of studies among transgender respondents (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

Figure 4 reveals the various reasons because of which the respondents dropped out their studies. It shows that the major reason is the discrimination faced by the respondent as 40% of the respondent drop out are because of it followed by 30% because of the family pressure to quit the studies.

c) Economic Status

This section reveals about the occupational status and monthly salary of the respondents with the help of figure 5 and figure 6. The economic status reveals the fact related to the sector in which they are working, there level of income, kind of work they are engaged in, etc.

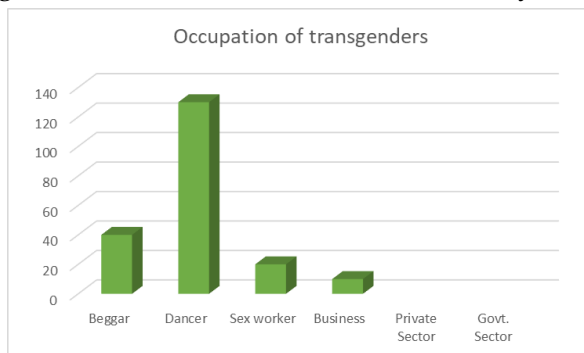


Figure 5. Occupation types among transgender respondents (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

As shown in figure 5, 65% of the respondents i.e. 130 earn their bread from dancing at various places, markets and events. It is also revealed that no respondent work in government or private sector which highlights the limited access of transgender people to formal employment opportunities.

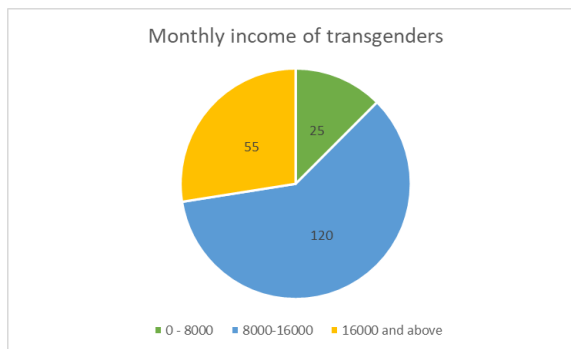


Figure 6. Monthly income distribution of transgender respondents (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

Figure 6 shows that major proportion of the respondents (60% i.e. 120 respondents) earns a monthly income ranging between ₹8,000–₹16,000. This indicates a low to moderate level of monthly income among the transgender people.

d) Social Barriers

This section aims to highlight the social exclusion, discrimination and violence faced by transgender people. It helps to understand how much difficulty they have to face in getting access to the very basic facilities. This section comprises of figure 7, figure 8, figure 9 and figure 10.

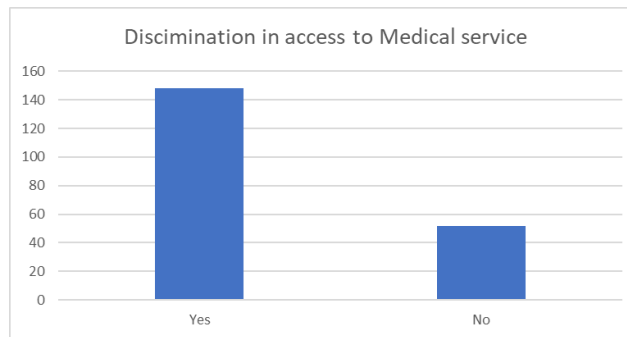


Figure 7. Experiences of discrimination in access to medical service (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

Figure 7 shows that out of 200 respondents 148 are denied of medical service at least one time because of their gender identity and 52 had no such experience in case of health service.

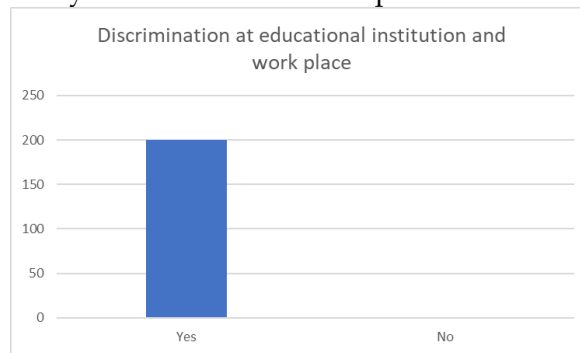


Figure 8. Experiences of discrimination at educational institution and workplace (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

It is revealed by figure 8 that all the respondents (100%) have experienced some sort of discrimination at their work and educational place. This finding highlights the social exclusion and structural bias faced by all the transgender individuals. It clearly indicates the failure of existing legal and institutional frameworks to ensure safe and inclusive environments for transgender individuals in educational and employment settings.

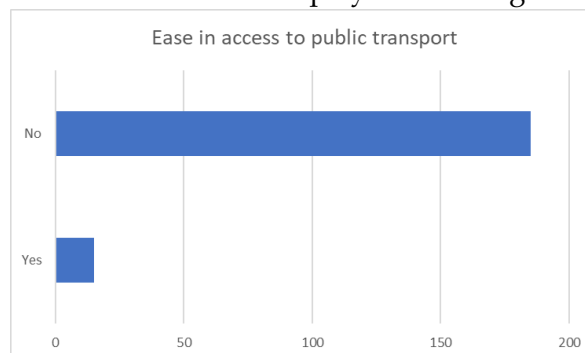


Figure 9. Ease in access to public transport (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

It is represented in figure 9 that 185 respondents out of 200 do not find it easy to travel in public transport. The respondents reported various reasons including verbal harassment, staring, fear of abuse and discriminatory behaviour from co-passengers and transport staff.

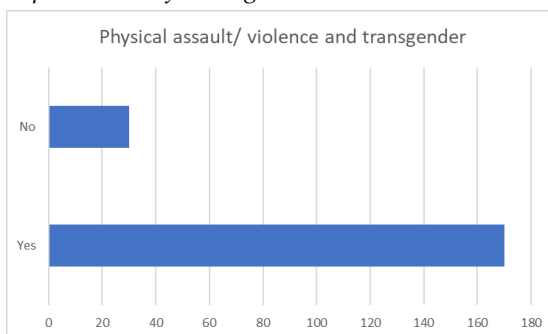


Figure 10. Experience of physical assault/violence among transgender (n = 200). Source: Primary Data, 2023.

Figure 10 shows that out of 200 respondents, 170 have faced some physical assault or abuse in their life and only 30 are untouched from this evil experience. This highlights the high prevalence of violence against transgender people. It indicates the urgent need for stronger legal protection, effective law enforcement, and community-level sensitisation to protect the transgender people in our society.

Suggestions:

In order to make this study more meaningful and more effective, more research should be done on ‘transgender people’. This study has revealed a number of facts that need to be studied separately for improving the standard of living of the transgender people and making them more empowered. Based on the study, following suggestions are put forth to fight the various barriers faced by transgender people in their social and economic empowerment: There should be some proportion of separate reservation for transgender people in both government and private sector jobs and in educational institutions. Some proportion of the seats must be reserved for the transgender people in public transports like roadways buses, metro etc. Government should run various programs and schemes for spreading awareness among the transgender people about their rights and legislature. Separate legislation should be made to protect them from violence and harassment they face at their workplace. Separate public toilets should be set up for them. Government should provide free training and skill development classes for the transgender people which help them to be self – employed.

Conclusion:

The position of transgender was never so demeaning in the Indian Society. But, with time and as the British people entered India, they felt disgusted even from the sight of transgender people. They started discriminating them. From then, the transgender people faced severe discrimination, assault, violence and hatred in every walk of life. This survey conducted on 200 transgender people to identify the barriers in their social and economic empowerment reveals many unrevealed facts and situations regarding the life of transgender people from their birth till their end. It is seen that how their family has not accepted their gender identity and how they all have faced discrimination at their educational institutions and workplace by the employer and the colleagues. The study highlights the difficulty they face in using public transports and in visiting public places because of the disgusted vision of the people. It is very painful to see how people discriminate another class of human and make their life so difficult to live. Some of them have also faced physical violence and assault at least once in their life. The study revealed the economic and financial conditions of the transgender people. Most of the transgender people earn by dancing on streets, public places, and on other

occasions. Some of them had to quit their studies incomplete because of their poor financial conditions. We can also derive a positive conclusion from this study that few of the transgender people are self – employed. Even if they are few in number, it can be seen as a good start. The best thing that came before us is that they are happy with their identity now and don't want to change their gender identity. This is really appreciable that they happily accept what they are even after the various challenges that they face.

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