

EMPOWERMENT OF TRANSGENDER STUDENTS AT SECONDARY SCHOOL THROUGH EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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Abstract: The empowerment of transgender students at the secondary school level is a crucial endeavor in fostering inclusivity and equality within educational settings. Through the implementation of targeted educational initiatives and active engagement of the community, significant strides can be made towards creating a supportive environment that enables transgender students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. This paper explores the multifaceted approach to empowerment, highlighting the pivotal role of education and community participation in addressing the unique challenges faced by transgender students. By promoting awareness, understanding, and acceptance, educational institutions can create safe spaces that validate the identities of transgender students and provide them with the resources and support they need to succeed. Moreover, community involvement plays a vital role in challenging societal norms, advocating for policy reforms, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect. Through collaborative efforts between educational institutions, community organizations, and policymakers, meaningful progress can be achieved in advancing the rights and well-being of transgender students in secondary schools.

Keywords: Transgender students, secondary school, empowerment, education, community participation.

INTRODUCTION

Our experiences in life are grounded in our bodies, which serve as our primary connection to the world. Through our bodies, we move, feel, and make sense of our surroundings. When we first meet strangers, one of the initial things we often notice about them is their gender. Gender is a performative aspect of identity that many of us engage with and recognize. Understanding one's own gender and that of others is a pivotal aspect of numerous discussions.

Transgender individuals often elicit a range of reactions and emotions from fascination and admiration to fear and repulsion. They occupy a complex space within human sexuality that has long captured the imagination. The transgender community is sometimes seen as disruptive to societal norms and at other times marginalized to the fringes of society. However, there is still much to be learned and accomplished in terms of understanding and supporting them.

Hijrajammat

Hijras reside in communities known as hijrajammat, which resemble contemporary village councils or gram panchayats. Initiation into the hijra household occurs under the guidance of a mentor or guru, following the Nirvan ceremony, which involves emasculation. After the ceremony, there is a forty-day recuperation period, and the individual undergoes a haldi/mehndi ceremony, signifying their formal acceptance into the household.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nicholas M. Teich, (2012). The book focuses on answering the question "What Does It Mean to Be Transgender?" in a simple and specific manner, questions the notion of gender in the minds of majority. It states the definition of various terms related to transgender in an unambiguous way.

Dutt choudhury (2015) The primary theme of this book is to link cultural and ethnic identity to sexual and gender identity in a world of homosexuality and transgender fear. **Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah** (2012), discussed about how transgender people live in society. It deals with interdisciplinary work to explore gender and diversity of sexual behaviour, implementation, and the identity of transgender.

TRANSGENDER AND EDUCATION

Inequality in Education

Despite the government's pledge outlined in the National Policy on Education, 1986:2002, to promote gender education and revise curricula to ensure inclusive gender representation in textbooks, little progress has been observed in this regard.

Challenges of Transgender Education

The term "third gender" poses its own set of challenges by framing sexuality within a hierarchical structure where the queer community is relegated to a lower position. While it does afford

them legal acknowledgment, it fails to ameliorate their challenging circumstances, as they continue to exist on the margins of society and are not afforded the same status as the broader Indian population.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The community is very backward even towards the educational upliftment from the beginning. In India, we see that as soon as a transgender child somehow passed the elementary level and entered into secondary schooling faced a number of problems such as discrimination, making fun of their identity, attitude, behavior life style, family background and even parents of such children have been socially exploited by the surrounding community.

Research Questions

- Whether the educational upliftment strategies and effective community participation will be able to successfully cater the needs of the transgender community with special reference to empowering the transgender students at secondary schooling level?
- Whether the latest bill, Transgender persons (Protection of Right Act, 2019) and Rules 2020 will be successfully establishing socio-economic safeguard protection, adaptation, inclusive nature, effective community participation and also cater the grassroots educational needs of the transgender students / community?

Hypothesis

The research is based upon the following hypothesis

- That the transgender community is highly marginalized in terms of education, Health and legal support in the current socio- economic context.
- They are deprived to their basic human rights and are subjected to violence in day-to-day life.

Objective

- (1) To study the status of the transgender students at secondary schooling level to underline their challenges and opportunities.
- (2) To assess the socio-economic condition of transgender for better livelihood opportunity
- (3) To study the health care status of the transgender community with special reference to transgender students during schooling experiences.

RESULT

- (4) To examine the access to social protection schemes for the transgender
- (5) To study the effectiveness of community participation in reference to empowering the transgender students with effective care, support and adaptation.

The transgender students at various educational level does not successfully cater the educational need with special reference to their elementary and secondary education which further causes a large number of schooling dropout and become easy targets of discrimination, violence and various social exclusion.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Type and Design:

This study employs a descriptive and observational approach conducted in the North and North-East districts of Delhi.

Study Population:

The study focuses on transgender individuals residing in the North and North-East districts of Delhi, encompassing transsexuals, drag queens, drag kings, masculine women, feminine men, and others who challenge normative gender roles. The term "transgender" also encompasses cross-dressers, irrespective of their gender identity. Additionally, the study involves 5 schools in the specified districts, comprising 15 teachers and students ranging from elementary to secondary school levels.

Exclusion Criteria:

Participants unwilling to take part in the study, those under 18 years of age, or individuals facing serious illnesses are excluded from participation.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique:

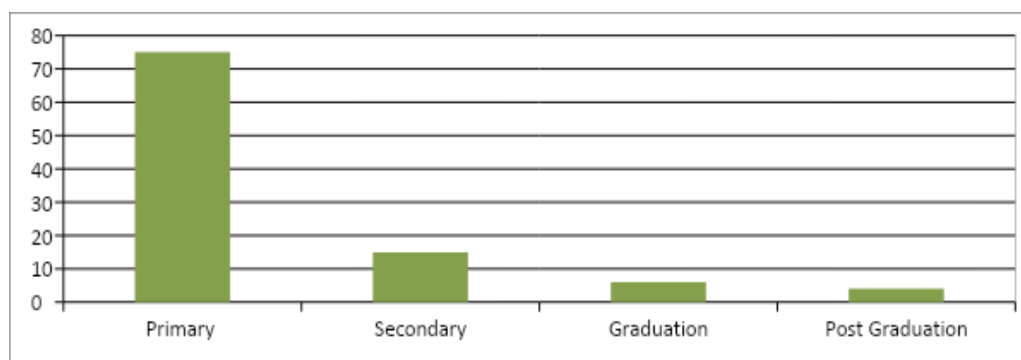
A sample size of 100 participants was selected for the study, employing a random sampling technique for data collection.

Study Tools and Technique:

Data collection utilized a self-administered questionnaire designed to gather pertinent socio-economic information, particularly focusing on education, health status, and school enrollment from primary to secondary school levels among transgender individuals. Interviewing the study subjects was conducted with their consent, preceded by a briefing on the questionnaire for transgender respondents.

Data Collection:

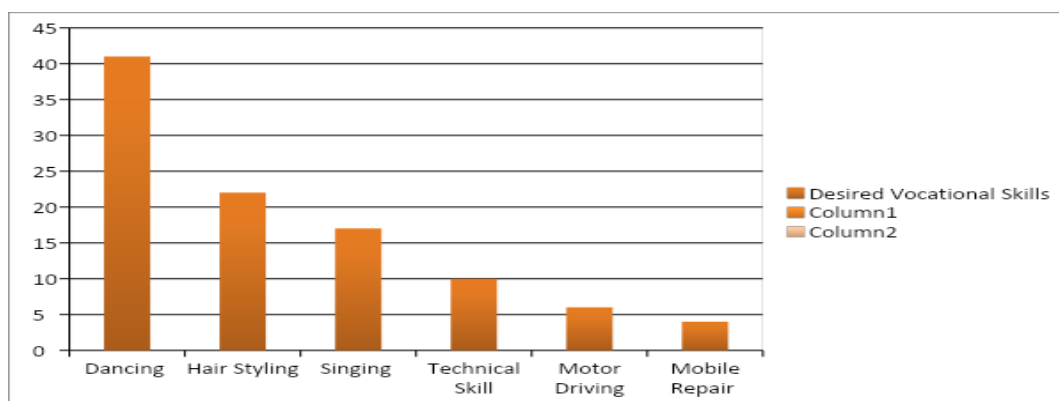
The data collection process was conducted by the researcher and analyzed using the statistical package SPSS.



Educational Attainment of Transgender

The analysis of response frequencies highlights a significant disparity in educational attainment among transgender individuals, with notably low levels observed. The majority, accounting for 75%, indicate attainment at the primary education level, followed by 15% at the secondary level. A mere 6% and 4% of respondents report reaching higher education levels, indicating a high dropout rate during early grades, often attributed to various socio-economic factors.

Reason for Dropout from School



The collected data illustrate various responses and rationales for school dropout among transgender individuals. The highest proportion of responses, approximately 65%, cite peer discrimination in school as the primary reason. Following closely is the absence of unisex toilets at school, accounting for 14% of responses, while discrimination by school staff and teachers follows at 11%. Financial constraints represent the lowest response, at 10%, contributing to dropout rates from formal educational settings.

The analysis reveals that the highest percentage of desired skills among respondents is in dancing, accounting for 41%. Following closely is hair styling, with 22% of respondents indicating interest. Singing ranks third, with 17% expressing a desire for this skill. Technical skills follow with 10%, while motor driving and mobile repair show the lowest interest, at 6% and 4% respectively.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Monthly Income

According to the survey, approximately half of the transgender community sustains themselves on a monthly income of Rs 6000 or below. Around 28.53% of those surveyed reported a monthly income ranging between Rs. 5000 and Rs. 10,000, with yearly earnings falling between 2 lakhs to 3 lakhs. The primary sources of income for many include begging at traffic signals or collecting Badhai during socio-cultural events.

Unemployment Rate

Among the transgender population, 20 percent were found to be unemployed, with the majority working under their guru's guidance and involved in Badhai and begging activities. Additionally, a significant portion of those employed had not revealed their distinct sexual identity to society or in any official documentation.

Discrimination

Studies indicate that 90 percent of transgender individuals have reported facing discrimination within their workplace, while 26 percent have disclosed losing their jobs as a result of such bias.

SUGGESTIONS

Internationally, the world is more aware about the violence against

the trans community than before and growing concern can be reflected by the act of many countries which are stepping up to change its laws and providing them legal identity, yet there is no specific international convention on the protection of homosexuals and many countries still persecute the people of transgender community due to nonconformity to binary gender system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the educational challenges faced by transgender individuals (TG), the following measures can be implemented to enhance access:

1. The State bears the responsibility of providing free and compulsory education up to the age of 14. Ensuring the fulfillment of this obligation is crucial for improving the educational prospects of the transgender community.
2. Policies should be developed at the state and/or district levels to include transgender individuals in the Economically Weaker Section category, thereby granting them necessary benefits in accordance with the Right to Education Act.
3. Student counseling services in schools should incorporate sensitization towards transgender and hijra individuals. Offering opportunities for students to engage with trained counselors is vital as transgender individuals often grapple with gender-related issues from an early age.
4. State and Central Education Boards (ICS/CBSE), the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT), and other relevant authorities ought to be encouraged to establish systems that sensitize their schools, universities, and educational institutions to the needs of the transgender community. This involves integrating transgender individuals into the inclusive education system. NCTE may also evolve schemes to infuse this idea in their different curricula for teacher training institutions in India. All these can be effective steps to address the issue of stigma/discrimination of the transgender people at the

societal level.

5. Advocating with and building capacities of people and organizations working in education sectors (NGOs, education 23 activists, teachers, principals and other authorities) to facilitate the mainstreaming efforts of the alienated TG community can be given much more emphasis.

Regular reviewing of the existing schemes and educational programs may be given more priority to assess their suitability to the transgender and hijra community. India is facing an acute shortage of skilled manpower in different sectors.

1. Incorporating vocational education and training into the mainstream education system is essential for the transgender community. Offering vocational training at secondary and higher secondary levels equips them with additional skills necessary for employment.
2. Educational institutions and universities should establish anti-discrimination cells to monitor and address any instances of discrimination against transgender individuals, particularly on campus. Similar to strict anti-ragging measures, zero tolerance should be maintained towards public humiliation or discrimination against transgender individuals.
3. Establishing helplines can serve as primary crisis management centers to document and address complaints of harassment against transgender individuals in their workplaces. These helplines can report such incidents to relevant agencies for appropriate action.
4. Government initiatives may include fee waivers, reimbursements, scholarships, free textbooks, subsidized hostel accommodation, and other facilities aimed at making higher and professional education more accessible to transgender students.
5. Setting up a telephonic helpline can provide information regarding employment opportunities, job openings, government schemes, and financial programs to assist transgender individuals.
6. Inclusive education plays a crucial role in the lives of transgender individuals. The government should prioritize the education of transgender persons, emphasizing the importance of inclusive educational practices.

CONCLUSION

Following Independence, the law was repealed in 1949, yet mistrust toward the transgender community persisted, relegating them to the margins without significant efforts toward their mainstream integration. Indian legislation has made little endeavor to assimilate this group into the mainstream population. Despite recent strides in recognition and social acceptance, transgender individuals (TGs) remain marginalized and differentiated in Indian society. They grapple with the challenge of reconciling their physical visibility with the invisibility of their community as a whole. Consequently, this invisibility renders TGs vulnerable to

gender violence and other human rights violations. India possesses the potential to combat its HIV/AIDS epidemic effectively, uphold the human rights of sexual minorities, and serve as a model for recognizing gender-based rights by acknowledging and implementing transgender rights. To achieve these objectives, however, India must abolish current discriminatory laws and enact legislation that ensures equal opportunities based on gender and sexuality.

LIMITATIONS

Self-selection bias may be present in the study, as no specific method was employed to verify the transgender identity of the study population.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

We anticipate that the transgender community will receive this study positively, feeling that their voices have been acknowledged. Moreover, we hope that the study's findings will raise awareness among public institutions and other service providers, prompting them to allocate resources toward gaining a deeper understanding of and enhancing the inclusion of transgender individuals' mental health needs.

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