

Stigma and Discrimination Towards Transgenders in the Society

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Abstract

India is the nation of unity in diversity, different kinds of people are living together in this republic nation. But the discrimination still exists here towards the Transgenders. It is mainly because of the stigma about the Transgenders in our society. The discrimination is the result of the stigma. Most of the people are not aware that the Transgenders evolve due to their biological factors, hormonal changes etc. They are also part of our society so they should be treated as equal as others in the society. Transgender people experience a mismatch between their gender identity or gender expression and their assigned sex. The social stigma is the extreme disapproval of or discontent with a person or group on socially characteristic grounds that are perceived. And serve to distinguish them from other members of a society.

Keywords: Transgender in Kerala, Stigma, discrimination, Quality of life, society

Transgender – An Introduction

The term transgender (TG) was popularized in 1970s (but implied in 1960) describing people who wanted to live as cross-gender without undergoing sex reassignment surgery. In the 1980s the term was expanded to an umbrella term, and became popular as a means of uniting all those whose gender identity did not mesh with their gender assigned at birth. Transgender is a general term applied to a variety of individuals, behaviors, and groups involving tendencies to vary from culturally accepted conventional gender roles. Transgender is the state of an individual's "gender identity" (self-identification as woman, man, neither or both). This does not match with ones "assigned sex" (identification by others as male, female or inter sex based on physical/genetic sex).

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Transgenders in India

The Transgender community in India, known as hijras (hijdas) number up to a million people and occupy a unique role in society. In many parts of India, they are called upon to offer blessings during auspicious occasions like weddings and at births. But they are not only ignored but often ostracized from society in the rest of the time. In India, the transgender persons have a strong historical background or presence in the religious texts and Indian mythology.

Transgender individuals are commonly viewed as a part of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community, forming the commonly known acronym LGBT. However, inclusion of transgender individuals within the sexual orientation political movement, and at social or cultural gay/lesbian events is highly debated. This is due to the division of sexual orientation and gender identity, which, though correlated, are different constructs. Many barriers that transgender people experience to accessing welfare services contravene their basic rights. Countries are often signatories to global documents that aim to protect rights, but for many reasons, transgender people are often considered not covered by these rights in reality. A societal negotiation to position and render sexuality status to transgender persons different from male or female identities certainly requires a stirring social reformation process in the present social context.

Transgender persons are one among the most marginalized and vulnerable communities in India who leads very pathetic and miserable life conditions. The general outlook of Kerala society is on the false pride embedded on high morality. Such perceptions force transgender persons to hide their sexual identities and expressions, suppresses sexual desires, live a life in dark as alien creatures of a conservative society. Living as a transgender in Kerala, someone who identifies with a gender different than one assigned at birth is an experience filled with trauma and tensions. Boys who dress in women's clothing or girls who identify themselves as male are either bullied or dismissed casually. When they grow up and assert their gender identities, relatives often turn hostile and banish transgender persons from them.

As with Transgender people in most of the world, they face extreme discrimination in the areas of health, housing, education, employment, immi-

gration, law, and any bureaucracy that is unable to place them into male or female gender categories. Transgender in India face a variety of issues. So far, TG women communities have been excluded from effectively participating in social and cultural life; economy; and politics and decision making processes. A primary reason (and consequence) of the exclusion is the lack of (or ambiguity in) legal recognition of the gender identity/ status of the transgender women, It is a key barrier that often prevents TG women in exercising their rights related to marriage with a man, child adoption, inheritance, wills and trusts, employment and access to public and private health facilities and access to and use of social welfare and health insurance schemes. Pushed to the periphery as social outcasts, they have to beg, dance or do sexwork for survival. The National AIDS policy acknowledges the existence of transgender identity and practices, yet paradoxically they remain the most invisible and marginalized population.

Stigma and Discrimination Related to TGS

Stigma is “an undesirable or discrediting attribute that an individual possesses, thus reducing that individual’s status in the eyes of society” (Goffman, 1963). It is a labeling of an individual or group as different or deviant. Discrimination moves into acts and behavior—a differential treatment based on those negative attitudes (Morrison, 2006). Violence against MSM and TG is related to and often can be equated with gender-based stigma and discrimination (S&D). When S&D is enacted against MSM and TG through verbal insults, threats, blackmail, or differential treatment, it becomes—along with physical and sexual violence—part of the same spectrum of gender-related abuse that sexual minorities typically face. Throughout the document, when referring to the range of gender-based S&D and violence perpetrated against MSM and TG, the term abuse is used. Stigma against transgender people refers to devaluing of transgender-identified or gender non-conforming people, and negative attitudes toward and lower levels of status accorded to non-cis-gender identified people and communities.

Discrimination is an action that treats people unfairly because of their membership in a particular social group. This stigma and discrimination faced by MSM and TG often find their roots in homophobia, or fear of homosexuality, as well as a general fear of those whose gender identity does not

adhere to traditional gender norms. Violence against MSM and TG often is a manifestation of stigma and discrimination due, at least in part, to the fact that they do not fit into traditional gender categories. Those who enact violence against MSM and TG may feel a sense of entitlement to greater power and control based on perceptions that his/her gender is of a higher social status than that of the victim.

Discrimination has prevented most hijras from obtaining decent education, jobs and housing, says human rights activists. The vast majority live in slums and, with limited job opportunities, resort to sex work or begging. They weave in and out of Mumbai's traffic or come onto the women's compartments of local trains, clap loudly and take money in exchange for a blessing.

Stigmatization of gender-non conform there is a perception that laws have been formulated in a binary framework and do not acknowledge their existence either as a third gender or as people whose gender identity is the opposite of that assigned at birth. This gives an impression that they have no legal protection and because of this, transgender adults are vulnerable to violence and discrimination. The discrimination inherent in institutions whose policies and systems reflect a binary gendered worldview prevents transgender people for applying to social welfare schemes, writing competitive exams, and seeking employment. Fear of being stigmatized or discriminated against, also causes many individuals to avoid processes (such as scheme applications) that may require an identity verification and disclosure of their transgender status. Sometimes, excessive powers given to the Police under laws provide scope for harassment and abuse. Our societal discomfort with transgenderism has rendered transgender victims of sexual assault, and domestic violence without necessary services. Rape Crisis Intervention Centers and domestic violence shelters are unprepared to address the issues of transgender people. Medical personnel, criminal justice and the legal systems often re-traumatize victims.

Research Methodology

Objectives of the Study

- To know about the biases about Transgenders in the society
- To know about the quality of life style among Transgenders
- To know about the problems faced by the Transgenders in public

In this study researcher used descriptive research design to describe the stigma and discrimination towards transgenders in the society. Data was collected from 50 transgenders from the Ernakulam district. The tool used for collecting the data in this study is questionnaire. Self prepared scale is used in the questionnaire. Collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented by using tables.

Major Findings based on demographic details

Out of 50 samples under study two were gender converted from female to male and remaining 48 (96%) were male to female converted.

Table: 1 Distribution of the respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	14	28.0
Upper Primary	28	56.0
Higher Secondary	3	6.0
Degree	5	10.0
Total	50	100.0
Marital Status		
Married	1	2.0
Unmarried	42	84.0
Divorced	6	12.0
Separated	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents were not able to attain good education it may be because of their identity issues that insisted them to stop the education. Only one fourth of the respondents could survive and attain good education.

Above two third of the respondents are unmarried it is because of that for the male to female transgenders the women are like sisters and they cannot lead a family life with women. For the female to male transgenders the men

are like brothers for them and are not interested to have sex with men. Some of them were forced to marry and later they were divorced. And some others were separated. They do prefer to have sex with the people of same sex.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents based on the People’s stigma about Transgenders

People’s Stigma about Transgenders	Frequency	Percentage
Blessed	7	14.0
Blamed	22	44.0
Mentally ill	21	42.0
Total	50	100.0

Majority of the transgenders think that the people are considering them as blamed people. It is because of some stigmas about transgenders in the society. And they had bitter experiences from the society. And another two third of the respondents feel that people seeing them as mentally ill it is because the Transgender’s acts and appear as the opposite sex. The rest one fourth of the respondents believe that some people see them as blessed and rooted from Hindu mythology.

Table 3 Distribution of the respondents based on the Discrimination due to stigma

Discrimination due to Stigma	Frequency	Percentage
Often	38	76.0
Sometimes	9	18.0
Never	0	0.0
Always	3	6.0
Total	50	100.0

Table No 4. Distribution of the respondents based on the Isolation from Society

Isolation from Society	Frequency	Percentage
Often	34	68.0
Sometimes	10	20.0
Never	2	4.0
Always	4	8.0
Total	50	100.0

Table No 5. Distribution of the respondents based on the People's fear to interact with the Transgenders

People's Fear to Interact with Trans genders	Frequency	Percentage
Often	20	40.0
Sometimes	12	24.0
Never	2	4.0
Always	16	32.0
Total	50	100.0

Table No 6. Distribution of the respondents based on the Denial of Education

Denial of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Often	23	46.0
Sometimes	21	42.0
Never	1	2.0
Always	5	10.0
Total	50	100.0

Table No 7. Distribution of the respondents based on the Denial of Occupation

Sl No.	Denial of Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Often	19	38.0
2.	Sometimes	15	30.0
3.	Never	2	4.0
4.	Always	14	28.0
	Total	50	100.0

Table No 8. Distribution of the respondents based on the Social Support

Sl No.	Social Support	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Often	14	28.0
2.	Sometimes	8	16.0
3.	Never	28	56.0
	Total	50	100.0

Table No 9. Distribution of respondents based on the Anxiety about Future

Sl No.	Anxiety about Future	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Often	17	34.0
2.	Sometimes	27	54.0
3.	Never	0	0.0
4.	Always	6	12.0
	Total	50	100.0

Table No 10. Distribution of the respondents based on the Harassment in Public places

Sl No.	Harassment in Public Places	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Often	37	74.0
2.	Sometimes	10	20.0
3.	Never	1	2.0
4.	Always	2	4.0
	Total	50	100.0

Table No 11. Distribution of respondents based on the Participation in Cultural Activities

Sl No.	Participation in Cultural Activities	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Often	13	26.0
2.	Sometimes	13	26.0
3.	Never	23	46.0
4.	Always	1	2.0
	Total	50	100.0

Table No 12. Distribution of the respondents based on the Physical Harassment from Police.

Sl No.	Physical Harassment from Police	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Often	26	52.0
2.	Sometimes	14	28.0
3.	Never	1	2.0
4.	Always	9	18.0
	Total	50	100.0

Case Study

“A” is one of the respondents aged 30 years belonging to a Muslim Religion and SSLC qualified. Respondent is unmarried and do not go for any other work due to past bitter experiences at workplace. Now he says that he is interested and settled with sex work. His only source of income is sex work from which he earns meager Rs: 3000 monthly. A is a native of Ernakulum District born in a Muslim family where he has 10 siblings including 4 brothers and 6 sisters. Respondent who is born male at birth found her different in nature, behavior and character which do not match with the male or female gender identity. A prefer himself to be addressed as “female”. Respondent realized the transgender identity at the age 13 while studying in 7th standard when she was sexually abused by one of the neighbors who found respondent more feminine in nature and behavior. Respondent who loved women’s nature, behavior and dressing used to contact and interact with the women at home and in neighborhood and she hardly ever came in contact with male members at home. Hence the respondent confronted severe aversion and objection from the family from the childhood onwards.

Throughout his schooling, the respondent expressed more of feminine qualities, behavior and nature for which he had to confront with a lot issues from the male and female students, “the dominated categories”, in the words of “A”. While studying in school being subjected to discrimination and exclusion the respondent every day waited the hours to run to 4 pm to get out of the school and be freed from all defaming events. Most of the time, the respondent was excluded and discriminated by the students, especially during drill hours. The male students were unwilling and never permitted the respondent to join any games in which boys included and therefore the respondent who always liked to be with girls joined them for games and entertaining events and the girls never showed any aversion or disgust towards the respondent. One of the events that respondent shared is that those students who used to aggressively behave, especially seniors, used to sexually and physically abuse the respondent often in the school. Thus the respondent who confronted a lot of severe and painful issues in the school used to pray to somehow complete the SSLC and escape from the school.

Respondent who belongs to a Muslim community had to face bitter words
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from people while entering Mosque, like “nalla malakkualippol poyittu, challu malakkukal kayari varunnundu” (which means the good people will go now and the bad people will comenow). Hence whenever the respondent went to Mosque for prayer he was teased, ridiculed and stared by the youngsters. He now declares that he is accustomed to these things.

Respondent had to undergo a lot of discrimination and problems which were generated and perpetrated by the family members who never tried to come to know what is the real feeling and sexual orientation of the respondent. Though some of the family members somewhat understood and tried to accept, none of them liked the respondent going for the sex work and involving in the sexual activities as a means to livelihood. All the members of family used to ridicule, tease with harsh words saying “the family does not want a female breadwinner who earns through sex work, get away from the family and spare your life rather than living”, said the respondent. Hence all of them used to advise the respondent to change the feminine nature, gestures and objected to him appearing in women’s dress. Respondent, who was victimized of rejection and aversion by family members, said that, most of the times when there is any celebration or any ceremony in the family, he used to spontaneously keep away in order to safeguard the dignity and status of the family and not to bring misfortune and shame to the family. The respondent who loved and wished to live as women was unable to do so because the family members could not fully understand the exact feeling and being of the gender identity of respondent. Though most of the family members are against the gender identity and behavior of respondent, most of them tried to adjust with the respondent and respondent also somehow managed to adjust and live in the family. She can accept and love herself but most of the time struggle and feel collapsed when the respondent is to remain alone and segregated at home and in other places. “I had to undergo issues and painful time during the time of my sisters’ marriage that because of my transgender personality number of good proposals were cancelled and had faced difficulty to find the groom”.

The respondent was compelled by the family members to immigrate to Kuwait, and hence he worked there for one and half years, during which he encountered a number of issues. He was loaded with overtime duty and was not paid as deserved. Most of the time, the employers abused and exploited

the respondent. For being involved in sex work she was arrested by the police and was subjected to severe and brutal punishment in the jail. Respondent now prefer sex work, because once involved in it, the respondent got money and sexual satisfaction as she desired for. Other than sex work, respondent does not want to involve in any other work, the main reason being that people do not accept the transgender people and do not want to employ them.

Respondent always love to be a women. On speaking about marriage she expressed the aversion on marriage in which respondent never want a woman as partner. The main reason stated is, respondent who always desired to be a woman and perform the role of woman cannot fulfill the responsibility and duty of a husband in marriage and can never satisfy a woman. Second reason is, respondent do not want to cheat a girl who always would expect her husband to be a perfect man. Third reason is that the fear of exclusion in marital life in case the woman whom the respondent would marry comes to know about the transgender identity and sex outside marriage. Respondent who achieved all the identity proofs and documents such as Passport, voter's ID, Bank Passbook, SSLC book, Aadhar Card in which gender is marked as male, the respondent want all of these replaced with TG gender identity. Respondent born male at birth, because of the dominating feminine nature always doubt and suspected about self-identity and have an inner conflict.

Findings based on the data of stigma about transgenders in the society

- 50% of transgenders often feel that there is stigmas about trans genders in the society
- 44% of the transgenders feel that the people are seeing them as blamed
- 82% Of the transgenders think that the people have a misconception that interacting with the transgenders will change the people as trans genders
- 46% of the respondents never feel that the people think like interacting with the transgenders will adversely affect their social position
- 78% of the respondents do not think that the people consider the trans-genders as a threat to the existence of the society
- 76% of the transgenders often feel discriminations due to stigmas
- 50% of the respondent often had denial of their rights due to these stig-

mas

- 68% of the transgenders often had to lead an isolated life in the society
- 66% of the transgenders often feel that the people are projecting their life adversely
- 58% of the respondents sometimes feel that naming them as trans genders itself is a negligence towards them
- 44% of the transgenders often think that the people are ashamed to interact with them
- 40% of the transgenders often feel that the people are afraid to interact with them
- 48% of the respondents often had to live detached from their family
- 92% of the transgenders feel it difficult to interact with the society
- 26% of the transgenders always and 24% of the respondents sometimes feel that there are stigmas about transgenders in the society
- 42% of the respondents feel that the people are seeing them as mentally ill and 14% think that people considering them as blessed
- 18% of the transgenders feel that the people think like interacting with the transgenders will adversely affect their social position
- 30% of the transgenders sometimes and 24% of them always think that the people feel interacting with the transgenders will adversely affect their social position
- 22% of the transgenders feel that people are considering them as a threat in the existence of the society

Findings based on the data of quality of life of Transgenders in the society

- 46% of the transgenders are sad with their current quality of life
- 72% of the respondents don't had to starve due to the lack of any earning
- 86% of them are not transsexual
- 46% of them are often denied for the opportunity of education
- 38% of the transgenders often denied for the opportunity of occupation
- 48% of the respondents often rejected for getting hospital services when they have health related issues
- 78% of the respondents are not getting any kind of financial support from the government

- 58% of the respondents often felt to commit suicide due to the negligence from the society
- 52% of the transgenders sometimes feel to achieve some aims in life
- Being a transgender 76% of the trans genders were restricted in achieving their dreams
- 58% of the transgenders sometimes get affected with epidemics and chronic illness
- 46% of the respondents often feel difficulties in having marriage of their own interest
- 54% of the respondents sometimes become anxious about their future life
- 48% of the respondents sometimes feel inequality in getting services
- 50% of the respondents feel that the media is projecting their life adversely
- 30% of the transgenders often and 24% of them always feel sad about their current quality of life
- 28% of them starved due to the lack of any earning
- 14% of the transgenders are transsexuals.
- 42% of the transgenders are sometimes and 10% of them are always denied for the opportunity of education. But 2% of them never had such experience
- 30% of the transgenders sometimes and 28% are always denied for occupation. But 4% of them never denied for occupation

Findings based on the data of problems faced by the transgenders in public

- 46% of the trans genders are often not able to take part in public ceremonies
- 46% of the respondents are often not able to travel independently in the society
- 56% of the transgenders do not get any kind of social support during difficulties
- 46% of the transgenders often get help when their rights are denied
- Being a transgender 62% of the respondents are denied the right to vote

- 46% of the transgenders often feel that it is the lack of proper programmes by the government is the sole reason for their rejection in the society
- 72% of the transgenders often be a victim of harassment in public
- 50% of respondents often mistreated by name calling in public
- 68% of the transgenders are sometimes able to use public toilets
- 48% of the transgenders were never able to take part in cultural activities
- 40% of the respondents were never able to communicate with the society
- 56% of the respondents often be a victim of sexual harassment
- Being a transgender 56% of them often face threats from the society
- Being a transgender 52% of the respondents often had denial of justice
- 54% of the transgenders often had misbehaviour from the public in the name of moral policing
- Being a transgender 50% of them are sometimes restricted to enter prayer centres
- Being a transgender 44% of them are often restricted to enter public tourist centres
- 52% of the transgenders often had physical harassment from police
- 38% of the respondents sometimes and 6% of them are always not able to take part in public ceremonies. 10% of them are able to take part in public ceremonies
- 40% of the respondents are sometimes and 14% of them always not able to travel independently in the society

Suggestions

- The people should be given awareness about the causes for being transgender
- Government should provide reservation for transgenders in every fields.
- Effective programmes and policies should be implemented for the protection of rights of Transgenders.
- Making free legal aid available to transgender individuals seeking redress against discrimination and violence
- Policy and institutional reforms that enable access to social protection schemes, targeting the poor and other at-risk groups, must be made transgender inclusive.

- The capacity of community organizations to monitor, document and respond to discrimination and human rights violations must be strengthened. Training in legal literacy, and public speaking for advocacy are needed

- Transgender human rights issues must be highlighted in the media and other public forums so as to improve public awareness, and increase transgender people's ability to realize those rights. Stigmatizing coverage in the media must be curbed

- Legislation should be there to ensure the rights of TGs regarding marriage, partnership, living relationship and parenting.

- Formation of State TG Welfare Board and district TG welfare committees.

- Monthly Pension scheme should be provided for Destitute Trans genders.

- Transgender-specific health information should be available in ways that do not exclude trans gender people who are illiterate, non-English speaking and non-Internet users

- The government should Prohibit and punish discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Conclusion

Stigma and discrimination against gender-nonconforming and transgenders in families and school systems, are further compounded by economic marginalization. There is a perception that laws have been formulated in a binary framework and do not acknowledge their existence either as a third gender or as people whose gender identity is the opposite of that assigned at birth. This gives an impression that they have no legal protection and because of this, transgender adults are vulnerable to violence and discrimination from a range of institutional structures. Discrimination has prevented most transgenders from obtaining decent education, jobs and housing. The vast majority live with limited job opportunities, resort to sex work or begging. The social workers are considered as the change makers in the society. The social work profession itself is said to be the betterment of the society through the betterment of individual. Each individual is unique so the social worker said to accept the individual as he is. Transgenders are also a part of the society it is not their fault that they are being transgenders. The social workers can spread the message and can take steps to aware the people about the transgenders and also to avoid discrimination and stigma about them. It is the duty of each

social worker as the profession is dedicated to mankind and humanity.

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