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Influence of Sociodemographic Variables on Thriving Among Adolescents, Ernakulam, Kerala

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Abstract

Mental health and thriving are crucial in adolescence since it is a shared responsibility. Thriving is important for successful development of an adolescent's behaviour modification. Social support together with thriving helps to lead a normative behaviour when they come under stress. **Aim:** This study aims to explore the relationship between various sociodemographic variables and thriving and its levels among adolescents. **Background:** Adolescent's mental health has become a prime focus on global mental health programme while mental wellbeing is a central point to their health and development. Adolescence is a period of identity formation along with many pubertal changes. Thriving is a key factor in positive youth development and helps to sustain in normalcy through adaptative regulations. **Methods:** The data collection was done from 50 adolescents studying in the 11th standard from a higher secondary school with the help of a questionnaire consists of socio-demographic characteristics and Brief Thriving Scale (BTS). **Results:** The results show 76% of the adolescents are in medium thriving level and there is a significant difference between thriving on social support and religion. **Conclusion:** The study findings suggest strengthening of positive youth development programmes along with social support helps to improve thriving among adolescents.

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Key Words: *Thriving, Adolescents, mental health, social support, positive youth development*

Introduction

Adolescence is a period between childhood and adulthood which consists of rapid developmental changes including physical, social and psychological. The term 'Thriving' comes under the Positive Youth Development (PYD) programmes aimed to the healthier and successful growth of the young. It is essential to have a better orientation on positive development among the adolescents to deal effectively with such developmental tasks which come across in transitional period. Bowers, E.P., John Geldhof, G., Johnson, S.K. *et al.* (2014), indicated, the PYD perspective is concerned not only with promotion of thriving, but also, with the prevention of risk factors and problem behaviors associated with adolescent development. Failure in the developmental tasks will lead to serious mental health conditions such as suicide, substance abuse, antisocial behaviour etc. and the impacts may persist to serious effects throughout the life-course. Thus thriving is essential in adolescence to feel good and to behave well in the society. According to Theokas Christina (2000), thriving is a concept denoting a change or a process; it is not a trait or a state. This study aims to find the relationship between sociodemographic variables and thriving and to analyse the levels of thriving among adolescents. The major objectives of this study were probed out as: -

- To explore the relationship between various sociodemographic variables and thriving among adolescents.
- To verify the level of thriving among adolescents.

Methods and Measurements

In this study, data collection was done by using simple random sampling. Data collected from 50 adolescents in a higher secondary school in Ernakulam district in the month of December 2022 with the permission of school authorities. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from plus one class. The toolkit consists of a Scale on thriving and socio-demo-

graphic profile. The scale used to measure thriving was Brief Thriving Scale (BTS) developed by Bruce W. Smith (2017). This scale consists of 6 items with scoring of 6-30. There are 5 choices scored as Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5. Those are scored 29 & 30 have very high level of thriving, those are in 26-28 is high level of thriving, those are in between 20-25 are have medium level of thriving, those falls between 15-19 are low level and 6-14 are in very low level thriving. the socio-demographic profile consists of age, gender, area of living, religion and social support. Analysis of data is done in percentage, mean, SD with Calculator.net, t' value with GraphPad and F' value with Social Science Statistics.

Results

Figure 1

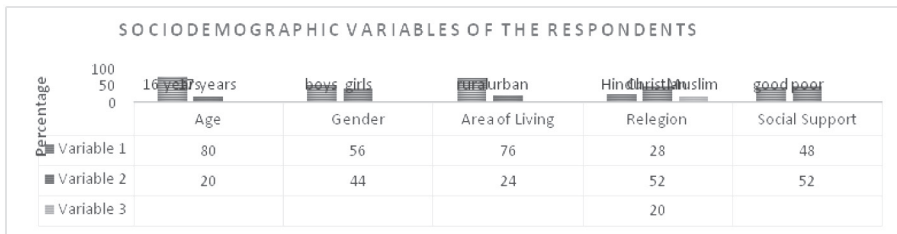


Figure 1 shows that there are 80% of the adolescents are in the age group of 16 and 20 % are in 12 years old. Gender wise classification indicates that 56% of the respondents are male and 44% are females. Based on living area type, a large majority (76%) are live in rural area and 24% are live in urban area. The religious composition is 28% are belongs to Hindu, 52% are Christians and 20% are Muslims. Based on social support system, 48% of the respondents are in getting good social support and 52% are not getting proper social support.

Table 1 shows levels of thriving based on gender, living area type and social support

Variables	Categories	Levels of Thriving	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Boys	Low	4	14.29
		Medium	20	71.42
		High	4	14.29
	Girls	Low	2	9.09
		Medium	18	81.82
		High	2	9.09
Living Area Type	Rural	Low	4	10.53
		Medium	30	78.94
		High	4	10.53
	Urban	Low	2	16.67
		Medium	8	66.66
		High	2	16.67
Social Support	Good Social Support	Low	0	0
		Medium	18	75
		High	6	25
	Poor Social Support	Low	6	23.08
		Medium	20	76.92
		High	0	0

Table 1 shows the level of thriving based on gender, living area type and social support. Based on gender, boys have more high level of thriving than girls, but in medium level of thriving, girls shows more and boys less. In low level thriving both genders show an equal level. Comparing the area of living, urban respondents showed more high- and low-level thriving than rural respondents. But medium level of thriving is more in rural area respondents compared to urbans. In the area of social support, there are no low-level thrivers in getting good social support and nobody is in the high-level thrivers among poor social support system. Medium thrivers are more in poor social

support group than those getting good social support. 23.08% of low-level thrivers are in poor social support group while 25% of good social support group are in high level of thriving.

Table 2 showing Mean, S.D and ‘t’ value on Thriving based on Gender, Area of Living, Social Support and Religion

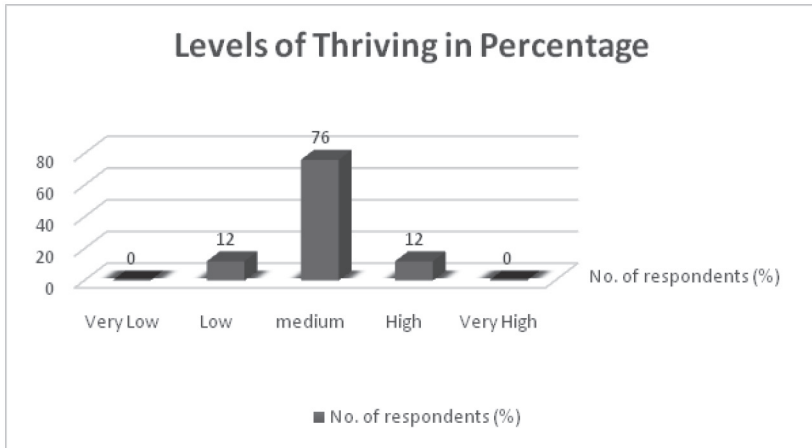
Variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	t’ value/ f’ value	Significance Level
Gender	Boys	28	23.07	2.36	0.27	NS
	Girls	22	23.27	2.83		
Area of Living	Rural	38	23.26	2.50	0.50	NS
	Urban	12	22.83	2.79		
Social Support	Yes	24	24.50	1.84	3.93	S
	No	26	22.12	2.35		
Religion	Hindu	14	24.71	1.32	5.66	S
	Christian	16	23.12	2.35		
	Muslim	10	21.6	2.95		

NS- Not Significant and **Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, t’ value and level of significance among the adolescents based on the variables gender, living area type, religion and social support. There are no significant differences exists between gender and living area type but in social support and religion, shows a significant difference on thriving.

The results shows that majority(76%) of adolescents shows medium thriving level and 12% are vest in both low and high levels of thriving. And it was found none in very low or in very high levels of thriving group.

Figure 2



Discussion

The results show there are no significant differences exist between gender and living area type but in social support variable, there exists a significant differences between religion and those are getting good social support and those belongs to poor social support. In a study, Scales PC, Benson PL, Roehlkepar-tain EC. (2011), proved there is a strong relationship between one's spark with a sense of voice and supportive opportunities and relationships strengthens concurrent outcomes, during developmental period. This study reveals that majority(76%) of adolescents shows medium thriving level and the level of high thriving is only up to 12% and 52% are responded as not getting proper social support. Present study also reveals that there is a significant difference between those are getting good social support and those are not getting proper social support. Thus, the lack of proper support system is considered as crucial in adolescent's thriving level. Better social support systems will help to solve many mental health problems and promotion of wellbeing. Helping Adolescents Thrive (HAT) toolkit helps the society through evidence-based support in the adolescent's mental health conditions in terms of promoting positive mental health programmes, suicidality prevention, substance abuse, antisocial behaviour etc. (WHO & UNICEF, 2021). Adolescents needs proper

care and attention in their developmental period to strengthen their self and thriving is vital for healthy development. According to WHO (2020), Mental health conditions account for a considerable proportion of the global disease burden during adolescence and are the leading cause of disability in young people. Adolescents developmental programmes will help to ensure support systems and to develop better relationship with their environment. Supportive relationships and the presence of mentors are anticipated to encourage for success and overcoming adversity (Theokas Christina, 2000).

Limitations

This study is limited to a small group of adolescents in an area with few demographic variables.

Suggestions

1. Link between various departments of different sectors to plan and implement effective mental health programmes.
2. Ensure proper monitoring and evaluation of the exiting/ongoing programmes to verify whether it is best suited.

Conclusion

Creating a supporting and sustainable environment is a key factor in the development of adolescents wellbeing through thriving. “HAT Guidelines on promotive and preventive mental health interventions for adolescents: helping adolescent thrive” provide evidence-informed recommendations on psychosocial interventions to promote positive mental health and prevent mental disorders among adolescents (WHO, 2020). Proper strategies should have to develop adolescents thriving in the implementation of policies, enforcement of laws, environmental modifications to promote and protect mental health, ensure support from care givers and to promote psycho-social intervention to promote mental health among adolescents. Better coordination between government and non-governmental systems are vital in the sustainable programme development for the adolescent’s wellbeing.

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Transgender life and Kerala society: Empirical observations

Komath R¹, Rakhi P² and Reeja PS³

Abstract

This empirical study examines the experiences and challenges faced by transgender individuals in the context of Kerala society. Kerala, a state in India, has a unique socio-cultural environment that influences the lived realities of transgender people. The objective of this research is to explore the various aspects of transgender life in Kerala, shedding light on their social, psychological, and economic conditions. The study had used qualitative methods such as, interviews, surveys, and participant observation. The study involved transgender individuals from diverse backgrounds, including different age groups, socioeconomic classes, and urban and rural areas. The research findings provide valuable insights into the complexities of transgender life and the ways in which Kerala society interacts with and impacts transgender individuals. However, the research also highlights positive developments and initiatives that have emerged to address these challenges. Transgender support organizations, legal reforms, and awareness campaigns have contributed to creating a more inclusive environment. Transgender individuals in Kerala have shown resilience and agency in navigating these obstacles, forming supportive networks and advocating for their rights.

Key Words: *transgender, Kerala society, social exclusion, discrimination.*

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Introduction

The transgender community in Kerala, India, has long been a marginalized and stigmatized group. Transgender individuals, often referred to as hijras, aravanis, or jogappas, face various social, economic, and health challenges within the society. Social changes like westernization and globalization bring drastic changes in the outlooks of people and as a part of it they are begin to accept other culture, but in Kerala persuasion of people towards transgender community continue to exist same as before. The social exclusion and marginalization faced by transgender community in Kerala exhibit the circumstances they lived in society.

The heterosexual convictions and homophobia among the people of Kerala society always challenge and questioned the legal rights of transgender community. In India there are few leading personalities who defeat the existing barriers and conquer their field and established their own identity. The famous film maker Rituparno Ghosh, Shabnam Mausi the first Indian transgender who elected to public office, India's first transgender college principle Manabi Bandopadhyay, Indias first transgender Sub Inspector K. Prathika Yashni and social activist actor come writer Kalki Subramaniam are some of the examples of persons who established their own identity. But there is not a single person from Kerala who got a national level attention. This situation occurred not due to the absence of talented among them but the circumstances which they live in Kerala are unfavorable to them (Poornima R. (2022)). The trans population in Kerala, unlike in the other states, remained invisible for a long time. Most of them either hesitated to come out of their closets or migrated to other states where they could find people of their community.

Traditionally, transgender persons were once a part of the broader culture across the country and treated with great respect. However, with the advent of colonialism, these sexual minorities were vilified and excluded from society. Even in modern society, transsexual people are subjected to multifaceted inconveniences, deprivations, and discriminatory tendencies (Jayasudha, 2017). Mainstream gender-related literature sheds more light on various types of violations of the human rights of transgender people all over the world.

Despite all the constitutional rights, they are denied basic rights like the right to education, liberty, freedom of expression, and rights against discrimination, exploitation, empowerment, violence, etc. (Hotchandani & Khushboo, 2017). Society identifies only binary gender indicated by the presence of only two types of restrooms in public places such as malls, theatres, hotels, bus stands, railway stations etc. The existing laws are gender-specific, such as in marriage, adoption, and property rights, which identify men and women only and remain silent in the case of transgender people (Madhana, 2017).

In order to bring changes in the existing situations and improving the present conditions of transgender people, Kerala government make some initiative steps. As part of their attempt Social Justice Department conducted a survey along with Sangama a Bangalore based NGO working for the upliftment of sexual minorities and also with Sexual Minorities Forum a recently launched organization for sexual minorities in Kerala and conducted surveys to address human rights violations and abuses faced by transgender community.

After the important verdict given by Supreme Court of India by declaring transgender community as a 'third gender' community (15th April 2014), the Centre and state governments are responsible to grant legal recognition to transgender person and to treat them as socially and educationally backward classes. As part of this attempt Kerala government unveil a policy for transgender welfare and It became a milestone in the history of Kerala by approving Transgender Policy Bill based on the verdict of Honorable Supreme Court of India. The entire strive shows a fine indication for securing the rights of transgender people in Kerala. A provision for building separate block for transgender person in jails is also reveals a welcoming frame of mind towards them. Academic community very receptive for the inclusion of transgender community. Lessons regarding sex and sexuality have to include in the curriculum to propagate awareness about sexual minorities and inculcate knowledge about how to treat a third gender as an equal". Another important landmark made by Loyola College of Social Sciences Sreekaryam, Thiruvananthapuram by declaring college as States first transgender inclusive 'Gender variant friendly campus' and transgender students can

take admission and study in the college with their own self-identified gender. Interest of students to include transgender persons in to mainstream society prompted teachers to think about transgender inclusive campus and behind the declaration.

These ventures should be functional only when the society's attitude towards transgender people undergo change. Then only transgender people get justice and security in society. Beyond the conventional notion of gender binaries society must have a benevolence to accept transgender community and their identity, then only we can bring them into mainstream society. This empirical study aims to shed light on the lived experiences of transgender individuals in Kerala and examine the intersection between transgender identities and the varied social context

Methodology

The study entitled locating transgender life in Kerala gave equal emphasize to ethnographic field work, personal narratives, textual analysis and analysis of visual media for collecting data. Researchers made frequent field visit during the year 2015-2016 for meeting transgender persons and also participated in their important festivals and gatherings. This helped the researchers to understand their problems and also the social perception on how transgender persons are perceived by other people in the society through direct observational method. During the field visits researchers gathered information through their personal narratives also. Narrative (story) in the human science should be defined provisionally as a discourse with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus after insights about the world and/ or peoples experience of it. This dissertation widely uses data gathered through personal narratives of transgender people interpreted their experiences in the Kerala context.

Textual analysis, another important methodological premise used in this study. Analyzing texts related to biographies and autobiographies of transgender people and also various texts on gender, sexuality in the international Indian and Kerala context. The help of visual media is also work

out in this study. Films related to transgender and sexual minorities and other interviews and programs help the researchers to gather information regarding to transgender experiences in Kerala.

Findings and discussion

Transgender life and their experiences in Kerala society have been a topic of discussion in recent years. This paper aims to provide empirical observations on the experiences of transgender individuals in Kerala, focusing on various realms of life such as education, employment, healthcare, and social interaction. Through this exploration, the researchers shed light on the challenges faced by transgender individuals in Kerala society and the need for greater awareness and support.

Social exclusion of Transgender Persons

Transgenders are interfacing various traumatic experiences in Kerala. They are the most neglected section of society due to their diverged gender identity. They face various kinds of exploitations throughout their life from their family, educational institutions and from the larger society itself. Karthikeyan & Gayathri (2016) found that Transgender communities face several social security issues; since most transgender women have been evicted or run away from home, they do not expect support from their biological families. Subsequently, they face a lot of challenges and issues, especially when they are not in a position to earn or have decreased their earning capacity due to lack of employment opportunities, health concerns, or old age). The transgender community in India is excluded from economic participation and lacks social security. They are facing a lack of specific social welfare schemes, a lack of livelihood options, barriers to using existing schemes, and a lack of access to health and life insurance schemes. Most employers deny employment to even skilled and qualified

One of such incident is given below:

‘We don’t want a sister, we want a brother. You can stay in our home if you can become a brother’. These words are said by a younger brother to his elder

brother in Kerala. But he can't left his female identity and he don't want to be a man. for him hiding his identity is equal to his death. That's while he left his home and named herself Bavana. He strongly wanted to become a woman so that he worked with a cycle balance team for nine years without having a single rupee salary. Morning to night he danced like a female dancer in a circus camp. His life was similar to slavery during that time. He have to wash their dress, clean all the vessels and at the end of the day he can't sleep in peace. Molesters took him from the place where he slept and abused him several times. But he can't fight against his fate, because no one is ready to accept him. He used to believe that nobody rescue him when he left that place. That's while he continued there for nine years¹.

CASE STUDY

● *Surya Vinod; Transgender activist, actress*

My name is Surya Vinod. I am born and bought up in Padoor a small village in Trivandrum district. I studied there till my tenth standard. After that I left my birth place. My parents are now living at Mannanthala village and I am living separately in Kazhakoottam because they couldn't accept my identity, especially after my sex re-assignment surgery.

I have studied in a boys Higher secondary School till tenth standard... My class mates called me by nickname '*Sundari*' (*beautiful girl*). I am afraid to go to school because I was victimized sexual abuse from male teachers and class mates. I always felt that my school like a graveyard. I faced humiliation from everywhere, from bus, road and even the shop where I used to filter my pen for 50 paisa ,but due to compulsion of my parents I continue my studies . I wanted to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor, but the constant torment and lack of support made it impossible. My parents,who come from a modest background, couldn't fully comprehend my identity struggle. They believed the words of others who labelled me as different, leading to a two-month stay in an asylum where even the doctors didn't diagnosed my real problem.

1 Mathrubumi Nileena Atholy

In every stage of my growth society point out me that I am a girl. My parents, neighbors, friends says that I always act and behave like a girl. They all impose femininity on me and finally I myself realize the female soul in me. The most important problem when we realize our self was alienation from within the family and from society. People never include me in functions and good rituals. Everybody makes fun of me and avoid me because of my transgender identity.

Dance was my only passion and its only my wealth. My mother allows me to study dance even she didn't have a atmosphere to spend money for that. She encouraged to participate in many competitions and won many prizes and I crowned as :”**kalathilakam**” of Trivandrum district in 10th standard. Even this situation I faced exploitations from my relatives and friends and compelled me to leave my place and family.

When I become an artist and reached in that field I have friend circle. Everybody says that best friends are those people who are very frank and always stay with us whenever we need them. But according to my definition a best friend is a person who can understand my lies also. They have to understand whether I am lying or not. I never make any kind of sexual relation with my friends. If I have that kind of relation with anyone then I can't see them as a friend. That's while I have only few friends.

My mother is my best friend. I have no secrets that I never told to my mom even we have different opinions in many things she always stood along with me. But when I reached home after my surgery my mother is the only person who accepts me. But when I understand the fact that my mother has to consider the other members of the family so I leave my home. when I reached in hijda culture I have few friends who become my best friends. My **guru**, **gurubai** are also my best friends. I have two children in hijra culture. They are known as **chelas**. Beyond my hijra family I have sisters and children's. People who accept me and talk to me with love are also my friends.

My another challenge was to meet my daily needs. Unemployment and social rejection made the situation more vulnerable so I forced to do sex

work. After some days I decided to leave the sex work. I realized sex work is not recognized as a prestigious job, Thus I started my career as an artist in Kairali Channel. But a turning point in my career was got me through Asianet's reality show Vodaphone Comedy Stars. It gave me recognition and acceptance in society as a mimicry artist. I got lot of opportunities and I performed in several stage shows and award for the **best Female comedian** from Asianet Channel.

At the same time I have to face lot of humiliations from several places. I have acceptance as an artist, but same time my femininity was always questioned and exploited. I dropped all male mannerisms and decide to live as a female. I always appear in femine attire. People stared at me. I have to face situations like I can't even travel in the bus. Where do I sit in a bus? Can I sit in the seat of man? If I sit in the ladies seat, they afraid of me and they don't sit nearby me if there is a vacant seat. When I reached in the program place other artist make problems. They several time told that 'it's our fault to bring such one for the program. I face loneliness everywhere due to my identity. But all these humiliations did not put me down. The talent of an artist inside me was very powerful, which help me to renowned a name for me. I lived under the shadow of that name. But in front of the public I have to live with humiliation.

The ill treatment and mental torture from police officers are made my life miserable. I was not able to accompany with my brother due to my gender identity. When I went for programs with my brother police asked us that whether I bring my brother sexual abuse. Similar situation was occurred when I traveled with my father at night after programs. Police asked us that whether I am going to use my father for sex work. I have to prove his parenthood at midnight in the road.

In public places some ladies asked "whether all transgenders are sex workers? They ask me, whether my mother a prostitute?. But through these insults I couragesly faced the challenge to be as a sex worker in my 15th age that taught to overcome by hurdles and stick on my life.

I decided to do surgery after few years. I want to reach my family in to a safe zone before my surgery. I really worked hard for it. I collected information

about the surgery. I met my hijra guru and lived in the hijra culture. After that I did my surgery. It was very expensive. I used all my earnings. My hijra guru and partner help me financially. As a woman after my surgery, I want to do something for the upliftment of transgenders and transsexuals.

Life after surgery was more problematic than before. The first question that I faced that Am I have the feelings and emotions of a woman? . Really it is not the matter of feelings and emotions. I desire to live in society without hesitation and humiliation. I want to become a complete women and that's while I did surgery. How can I live with a male organ in my body if I strongly feel I am a woman? Femininity was only in my mind. I was born with a male body. How many of them understand my mindset. I would like to prove my femininity in front of people, that's why I did s sex transplantation surgery.

The above case study portrays the challenging situation faced by transgenders in the contemporary society. She experienced rejection, discrimination, and exploitation throughout her life. This case study reflects the lack of acceptance and understanding for transgenders which often leads to their exclusion and marginalization. Transgender's exposes the gaps in societal support systems and highlights the need for inclusive policies and programs to address their unique needs. It emphasizes the vulnerability and exploitation faced by sex workers, highlighting the complex choices they often have to make in the absence of viable alternatives. Surya's experiences highlights the strength and resilience of transgender individuals who strive to create a better future for themselves and their community. It also reveals transgenders' challenges societal norms and need to promote understanding and acceptance for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity. It offers a glimpse into the experiences faced by transgender individuals and serves as a call to action for greater inclusion, support, and recognition of their rights and dignity.

A sustainable livelihood is required for the economic and social security of transgenders . The study data revealed that transgender persons in Odisha did not have any source of livelihood and their current source of income was unsustainable. Unfortunately, the lack of livelihood opportunities is caused

for multiple reasons and is rooted in complex social beliefs (Kumar, 2018). Transgender people find it exceptionally difficult to get suitable employment of their choice. Transgender people face unemployment as a major problem since they lack education, and employers are not interested in giving jobs to the transgender community. They run small dhabas or pan shops. Since they do not have many employment opportunities, they resort to sex work or begging for their livelihood (Rafeek, 2015). Transgender people are relegated to the roles of hecklers, beggars, and sex workers. Unfortunately, this mass rejection of their individuality and gender identity renders many of them unfit for employment, leading them to a life of abuse. The methodology of this study is primarily qualitative in nature, using case studies and in-depth interviews (Babbbar & Khatri, 2016).

Exclusion from Educational Rights

In Kerala transgender community is educationally very backward. The immature attitude and intolerance from teachers and students is the main reason for the increasing dropouts among transgender people. The lack of eligibility becomes a hurdle for transgender people to achieve a better job.. Goswami and Karmakar (2018) also attempted to shed light on the educational backwardness of the transgender community. Transgender people do not receive formal education because of severe and continuous discrimination. Even if the parents want them to be educated, the schools remain reluctant to admit them (Goswami, 2018). Consequently, transgender people without education and skills do not get employment opportunities. Similarly in an empirical study in Chattisgarh, Panigrahi and Mathew (2019) opine that transgender communities are deprived of their families and schools. From early childhood, they quit education and have minimal career opportunities. Most of them are illiterate as they have been disowned by their families.

Most of the transgender population in India are uneducated or under-educated, excluding them from participating in social, political, cultural, and economic activities. One of the most important reasons for their economic

exclusion has emerged from their high dropout rates, low level of and reduced access to vocational skills (Haseena, 2018).

In the autobiography *Oru Malayali Hijadayude Athmakatha*, written by Jareena narrates an incident. Jareena is a transwoman . In her biography she narrates that she was first sexually abused by her school head master when she was in 4th standard. She also enjoyed it because head master was the only person who considers the femininity in her. Head master abuses her for several times. During the class time head master calls her to the officer room. There were no other staff and students during that time and head master sexually abused her. During the vacation time also head maser came to the school and calls her to the school. And they interplay sexual activities there. It was continued till the completion of her 4th standard.

Another narrative, Mathew, a 14 year old boy was sexually abused by his teacher. Teacher told him that, he wiii add extra marks to Mathew when he cooperate with the teacher for sexual activities. Mathew was tortured a lot for not cooperating with teacher. Teacher mentally tortures him and also gets out him from the class. Finally he dropped his studies in the 9th standard. Students are also teases him for having effeminate gender expression. Mathew's identity is even today he hides from his parent. He was afraid that his little femininity becomes a big problem to his family. In this situation if he does his coming out as a transgender it will create so many problems and he will be thrown away from his family.

Vinu is a transwoman from Payyannur. It is not his original name, because he wants to keep him anonymous. He is effeminate in his behavior and gender expression from the age of five. It was first realized by his head master of his school. Instead of supporting him, teacher sexually abused him several time. It continued till the completion of his studies. Other students in the class also always tease him and take advantage of him. Due to these problems, he dropped from his studies after 10th standard. He didn't get any job. Finally he turns into a sex worker for his survival.

These cases and narrative illustrate distressed condition of sexually abused transgenders in their educational institutions. The exclusions from their

educational rights perpetuates social and economic disparities, reinforces societal marginalization, and hinders personal growth, and empowerment and leads to mental health issues among transgender individuals. Due to their low educational standards and poor accessibility to the skill development programs available in the economy, they are not in a position to acquire any special skills which can be marketable for livelihood purposes. Since they are engaged in certain occupations that are risky and irregular and address the needs of a small section of the population, and since these are not based on any skill, income is also uncertain and very low. This has forced them to tap accessible sources of livelihood like begging, sex work, and dancing in public places (Panigrahi & Mathew, 2019).

Another study found the livelihood of transgender groups is persistent with threats and uncertainty, and they often resort to mean jobs to sustain their living. Most transgender people choose the sex industry and beg for their survival because they have discontinued their education at either the primary or secondary level. Transgender communities scrape out their living by begging, which includes singing in trains and buses, forcefully blessing people in public places, collecting money at traffic signals, etc., doing wearisome jobs, and sex work, in some cases. Due to their low-level background, they are susceptible to harassment by the police. Until recently, they were denied the right to education and could not occupy government or private jobs (Thiyagarajan & Saravanan, 2013). Most employers deny employment to qualified and skilled transgender people. The lack of livelihood options is a crucial reason for a significant proportion of transgender people to choose or continue to be in begging and sex work, with its associated HIV and health-related risks (Karthikeyan & Gayathri, 2016).

Exclusion from Family life

The institution called the family is usually seen as a safe shelter free from violence for every individual. Everyone portrays family as heaven in which individual finds fulfillment, love and peace. This commonsense about the family is further boosted by international human rights law. The Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, the founding document of human rights law, notes that 'the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state'¹.

Giving emphasize to this presumption that family is the essential structure even for the protection of human rights, including the rights of liberty and dignity of the individuals. But for transgender persons the experience of the family is frighteningly different. The institution of family plays a significant role in the marginalization and exploitation of transgender communities. The functions of family are nonetheless powerful, code which relentlessly monitor the borders of gender and are not prepared to tolerate forms of gender non-conformity.

Following narratives illustrates how family responses to their offspring's emerging gender/sexual identity.

Surya, a 30 year old transsexual from Thiruvananthapuram states that; *even since I can remember I have always identified as a woman.*

I studied till 10th standard only, after that I have to leave my home. Now I am separately living from my family because they did not accept me. They avoid me completely after my sex reassignment surgery. My father and brother never talk to me after this. I lived my whole life for my family. I earn money even by doing sex work to look after my family. But now my family is not with me.

My family members found something is wrong with my gender identity. My feminine mannerisms disturbed and they put me in asylum for 2 months. They scold me, beaten me and cursed me because of my effeminate character. They told we feel shame on me.

I used to visit my home for certain occasions but only to my mother talk with me other members treat like a bad omen.

Another narrative by Harini transsexual from Thiruvanthapuram'

1 Human rights declaration article 60.

Before my transition I was vipin. I am born in a Christian family at Kmbalangi of Ernamkulam district. I realize my femininity when I was in 4th standard. One of my cousins abuses me for the first time and I fell in love with him at the age of 8. In my family everybody called me 'Pennayi/Pennachi'¹. My father identified the changes in me because he was lived in Bombay for few years and travel outside a lot. So he understands what's happening with me. My father brought bear and cigarettes at my 14th age to bring forth my masculine identity .

After my tenth exam they joined me in to a Seminary. But I can't adjust that environment and after one month I came back to my home. They not allow me go to higher studies because I got less marks in my 10th exam. They joined me in to a tiles factory. my co-workers gave me hands and I fainted many time using it. They also realize the femininity in me and used to abuse me sexually. Finally I flee to Calicut and do sex work for my survival. After that I went to Bangalore and joined in the hijra culture.

My parents never accept me. When I made calls to my home, they told me that who the hell told you, you are my daughter? They spoil all the evidence of my existence including my identity card and birth certificate. they ruined my SSLC certificate also. They never search for me when I left my home. When they reached Bangalore for the treatment of my father, I helped them by giving cash Rs 25000/- rupees My guru gave her gold ornaments and I gage it and borrowed money and gave to my parents. I have to return that cash by doing sex work. When we are in the hospital my guru told my mother to call my name at least once. That time my name was Ajitha. And my mother called me Ajitha and now that mother told me she don't know me and she don't have a daughter like me. They used me only for money .I told to my parents that I will wait till 10 years. You can come back within this period . After that there is no need to search for me. But still I am waiting for them

1 a derogatory term to demean the gender of a person who born with male identity

Not only in Kerala or India, other parts of the world also families approach towards gender non-conformed children was very negative. Leela Alcorn a young transgender from America wrote a letter before her suicide. She notes that;

'I feel like a girl trapped in a boy's body, and I have felt that way ever since I was four years old. I never knew there was a word for that feeling, nor was it possible for a boy to become a girl, so I never told anyone and I just continued to do traditionally "boyish" things to try to fit in. When I was 14, I learned what transgender meant and cried of happiness. After 10 years of confusion I finally understood who I was. I immediately told my mom, and she reacted extremely negatively, telling me that it was a phase, that I would never truly be a girl, that God doesn't make mistakes, that I am wrong. If you are reading this, parents, please don't tell this to your kids. Even if you are Christian or are against transgender people don't ever say that to someone, especially your kid. That won't do anything but make them hate them self. That's exactly what it did to me.'

Akkai Padmashali, another transwoman and the first Rajyolsava Awardee of Karnataka state, states that

'My parents pour hot water on my legs when I play with boys in my childhood. They beaten and scold me a lot because of my effeminate character.'

What emerges from these narratives is that family as a social institution polices gender non-conformity in terms of their attitudes, identity and behavior and therefore reinforces the heterosexist regime. Instead of protecting their children family throw them out of their home. Those who violate the existing social codes are subject to humiliation, beating and expulsion from the family itself. The exploitation and denial of family is the main reason for all other kind of problems and further marginalization faced by transgender people.

Enforced marriages: Exclusion from Individual Rights

Enforced marriage is another crucial challenge interfaced by transgender community in Kerala. The heterosexual convictions and homophobia compel

transgender people in to marriage. Many of the parents think that marriage is a remedy for gender identity disorder. But compulsory marriages and divorces drive them in to depression

One such incident is given below¹;

It is the story of Veena. She is a female to male transgender. Her identity was not recognized by her parents. That's while when she reached the age of marriage her parents compel him for getting married. But she strongly stayed in her ideology. She wanted to marry a girl instead of man. But her parents emotionally blackmailed her and threatened to commit suicide thus she agreed for a marriage. But it was difficult for her to accept a husband and to have physical relation with him. She became victim of marital rape for several times. She was afraid to move for a legal procedure because, she thought that she will be punished because of denying sexual need of her husband. After having a child they break up their relationship. She was in depression for several years. Her husband also faced lot of stress during their marital life and above all that child become an orphan without getting the love and care of parents.

Another incident is narrated by Vijayaraja Mallika, famous transgender poet and activist. She wrote ...

My marriage is one of the other sacrifices of my life I did for my parents. After completing my plus two, I was undergone various hormone treatments. Injection continued for five years. It made me emotionally vulnerable. I was affected by various diseases including arthritis. Society considers me as a boy and my marriage become a social necessity. Everybody told to my parents that I will be more masculine when I married a girl. My parents also think that there is need for a girl in my life to take care of me. They find out a girl from a poor family. She was a widow and had a child. My marriage life was horrible. It was not possible for me to make sexual relation with her. She also suffers a lot. I never wanted to marry a girl. In front of the society I am her husband. People interfere in my private life.

1 this incident is taken from Nileena Atholys article.

They asked several questions to denigrate my identity. People around her also tease her. They comment her whether she married a Chanthupottu¹.

From the above two narratives it is clear that transgender people are widely enforced for getting married. Efforts are needed to address the issue of enforced marriages and protect the rights of transgender individuals. This includes raising awareness about transgender rights, promoting acceptance and understanding within families and communities, and implementing legal protections against forced marriages. It is crucial to empower transgender individuals to make their own choices regarding relationships and marriages, and to ensure their safety, well-being, and equal treatment under the law

Exclusion from employment opportunities; Sex Work as a Last Resort

Sex work of transgenders is considered as a survival sex. They have moved in to sex work for variety of reasons. One reason involves the programmatic consideration of supporting the family. They have moved into sex work after trying out a number of other jobs. Sex work becomes necessary in view of the fact that no employer is willing to retain them once their gender identity becomes public. Transgenders who are migrating to other parts of the country and lives in hijra culture do sex work because of the self-acceptance of being hijra and with the related discovery of a certain kind of freedom provided by hijra community. So, they think that nothing disreputable about being a sex worker and it is as legitimate piece of work as any other.

Following is a narratives of a transgender shows how they prone to sex work due to denial of employment opportunities in the job market

I have to leave my home when I was 15 years old. I wandered in the street in the whole day and night throughout rain and hot climate without having food and water. I don't get any shelter anywhere. I wandered like a mad beggar in the street. I never did any criminal offense. The only fault in my side was I have a mind to become a girl. Society pointed out me that I am a girl. And I

1 It is used as a derogatory term to denote effeminate man.

searched the truth behind it. I never hurt anyone in my life and I don't want to be. I have father, mother, siblings and other relatives but the fault they seen on me was my femininity. Because of my female character everybody alienate me. I have to take food from waste along with dogs in streets due to my hunger

Another narration depicts:

*I completely alienated when I left my home. I am only 15 years old I left my home. I wandered in the street in the whole day and night ignoring adverse climatic condition I lived without taking food and drinking water. I didn't get any shelter anywhere. I wandered like a beggar in the street..During these days I had to take food from waste along with the stray dogs . Someone invite me for sex work and gave 50 rupees. He takes me in to a hotel room and bought one biriyani I have to stay the whole day in that room . I felt I am safe and secure and could sleep without fear.. Next day I thought if I get someone for sex then will get fifty rupees. I had permanent partners in that hotel. Thus I became a sex worker. Steadily and slowly it grown as a business. I had to face many problems during the time of sex work. I have to fight with **rowdies and gundas**, and criminals and sometimes with my sexual partners. People scold me and beat me many times and I got injured.. All these hard ships taught me to overcome challenging situations. (Surya ,transwomen from kerala)*

Necessities lead them to sex work many times. Soorya Abilash a transsexual and transwoman says that she don't want to do sex work. She was ready to do any work like cleaning someone's home or cleaning vessels. But nobody gave any job to them due to her identity.

These narratives illustrate the interconnectedness between exclusion from employment opportunities and the challenging circumstances that lead some transgender individuals to turn to sex work as a last resort. These narratives emphasize the importance of advocating for transgender rights, promoting inclusivity in the job market, and addressing the systemic barriers that perpetuate their marginalization

Linking Social Exclusion and Suicide

Following note is suicide letter written by Leelah Alcorn an American transwomen, which is posted in online social media before her death. This

letter clearly says the trauma faced by transgenders all over the world. Their problems are similar all over the world.

If you are reading this, it means that I have committed suicide and obviously failed to delete this post from my queue. Please don't be sad, it's for the better. The life I would've lived isn't worth living in... because I'm transgender. I could go into detail explaining why I feel that way, but this note is probably going to be lengthy enough as it is. To put it simply, I feel like a girl trapped in a boy's body, and I've felt that way ever since I was 4. I never knew there was a word for that feeling, nor was it possible for a boy to become a girl, so I never told anyone and I just continued to do traditionally "boyish" things to try to fit in.

When I was 14, I learned what transgender meant and cried of happiness. After 10 years of confusion I finally understood who I was. I immediately told my mom, and she reacted extremely negatively, telling me that it was a phase, that I would never truly be a girl, that God doesn't make mistakes, that I am wrong. If you are reading this, parents, please don't tell this to your kids. Even if you are Christian or are against transgender people don't ever say that to someone, especially your kid. That won't do anything but make them hate them self. That's exactly what it did to me.

My mom started taking me to a therapist, but would only take me to christian therapists, (who were all very biased) so I never actually got the therapy I needed to cure me of my depression. I only got more christians telling me that I was selfish and wrong and that I should look to God for help.

When I was 16 I realized that my parents would never come around, and that I would have to wait until I was 18 to start any sort of transitioning treatment, which absolutely broke my heart. The longer you wait, the harder it is to transition. I felt hopeless, that I was just going to look like a man in drag for the rest of my life. On my 16th birthday, when I didn't receive consent from my parents to start transitioning, I cried myself to sleep.

The attitude towards my parents and came out as gay at school, thinking that maybe if I eased into coming out as trans it would be less of a shock. Although the reaction from my friends was positive, my parents

were pissed. They felt like I was attacking their image, and that I was an embarrassment to them. They wanted me to be their perfect little straight christian boy, and that's obviously not what I wanted.

So they took me out of public school, took away my laptop and phone, and forbid me of getting on any sort of social media, completely isolating me from my friends. This was probably the part of my life when I was the most depressed, and I'm surprised I didn't kill myself. I was completely alone for 5 months. No friends, no support, no love. Just my parent's disappointment and the cruelty of loneliness.

*At the end of the school year, my parents finally came around and gave me my phone and let me back on social media. I was excited, I finally had my friends back. They were extremely excited to see me and talk to me, but only at first. Eventually they realized they didn't actually give a s**t about me, and I felt even lonelier than I did before. The only friends I thought I had only liked me because they saw me five times a week.*

After a summer of having almost no friends plus the weight of having to think about college, save money for moving out, keep my grades up, go to church each week and felt that I live for, I have decided I've had enough. I'm never going to transition successfully, even when I move out. I'm never going to be happy with the way I look or sound. I'm never going to have enough friends to satisfy me. I'm never going to have enough love to satisfy me. I'm never going to find a man who loves me. I'm never going to be happy. Either I live the rest of my life as a lonely man who wishes he were a woman or I lived as a solitary woman who hates herself. There's no success There's no way to out. I'm sad enough already, I don't need my life to get any worse. People say "it gets better" but that isn't true in my case. It gets worse. Each day I get worse.

That's the gist of it, that's why I feel like killing myself. Sorry if that's not a good enough reason for you, it's good enough for me. As for my will, I want 100% of the things that I legally own to be sold and the money (plus my money in the bank) to be given to trans civil rights movements and support groups, The only way I will rest in peace is if one day transgender

people aren't treated the way I was, they're treated like humans, with valid feelings and human rights. Gender needs to be taught about in schools, the earlier the better. My death needs to mean something. My death needs to be counted in the number of transgender people who commit suicide this year. I want someone to look at that number and say "that's fed up" and fix it. Fix society. Please. Goodbye¹.

This suicide became an international news and the activist and LGBTQ members all over the world respond through online social networks about this issue. Many transgenders come out by establishing their identity. Many transgender doctors and engineers are also including in them. Many countries started enquire about the transgender suicide rate of the countries after the suicide of Leelah Alcorn.

The transgender survey conducted by Sangama and SMFK in 2014 says that 35 percentage of transgenders in Kerala are make attempt to commit suicide at least once in their life. 96 percent of them are go through depression. Denial of education, employment opportunities, exclusion from one's own family friends and society and inconsistency between one's own body and mind etc leads them to depression. Compulsory marriages are also another important reason for increasing suicide rates among transgenders.

One of such incident is given below.

Sukumaran was born as a man but his mannerisms are similar to a woman. His parents think that his problem can be solved through a marriage, and he become more masculine in his mannerism and activities after the marriage. So his parents compel him for marriage. They told him that if he does not marry a girl his parents will commit suicide. Finally he married a girl. In the first night when his wife touches him for the first time he screams and cried in a loud voice. His mind was not ready for being a husband. He wanted to marry a man and live with him by doing a wife's role. He was affected to depression and took treatment for almost 5 years. Finally he committed suicide....

1 Internet sources

Many transgender persons says that they made several attempt to kill themselves because of the extreme lonesness and harrasement of their family and society. Vijayaraja Mallika, a transwoman says that she made several suicidal attempts when she was in school. She drank ink thinking that it was poison.

Suicide among transgender person is a kind of egoistic suicide as per the Durkheimian classification of suicide. Egoistic suicide is the indication of elongated sense of alienation or not integrating to them in stream society. Transgender persons are undergoing such situation; they are completely avoided by their family and excluded from other social relationships. These suicide rates indicate that a normal heterosexual life is not possible for transgender person. The unauthenticated records show that 37 transgender persons commit suicide between the years of 2008-2013.

Transgenders are the victims of brutalities in every society. There are somany unnatural death is reporting from many pat of the country but no further enquiries are done based on them. The Crime Records Bureau of Kerala has no evidence or records about transgender suicides and murders in Kerala even though many unnatural deaths are occurred in several places of the state.

Transgenders' Murders: A Grim Reality

The transgender community has long faced discrimination and marginalization, enduring everything from social stigma to physical violence. Recent years have seen a surge in violence against transgender people, with murder rates hitting an all-time high. Transgender individuals are at an increased risk of being targeted for hate crimes, and the consequences can be deadly. It is a grim reality that we must confront head-on, as we seek to understand the root causes of this violence and take action to protect the lives of all members of our society. In this narrative, we will explore the alarming rate of murders targeting transgender people

Anil sadanandan/ sweet Maria was murdered at night on 9th may 2012, at their residence in Thankasserry in Kollam district. She was deeply connected with the

human rights issues of sexual minorities in Kerala. She was the person who comes out about her being as a transgender in Kerala and also divorces her wife. She was found brutally murdered by slit in her throat and she was stabbed in her stomach. Chilli powder was put on the body so that police dog would not sniff. The door was locked from outside and next day her co-workers came to see her¹.

Four persons have been arrested in this case. Investigating team says that one of them had physical relation with Sweet Maria, and killed her because he suspected her to be HIV+. The accused was told by someone else that Anil had been living with HIV. It prompted him to take revenge on Anil, says inspector Sugathan, who investigate the probe. The accused later tested HIV negative. Her friends and activist do not believe this story. Police are also looking other angles like moral policing or honor killing. Sweet Maria has no hesitation to announce her identity in front of the public. But the media was reluctant to do so. Some local news papers only reports that an employee of harbor engineering was killed with no context to who she was. Similar cases are taken place in various parts of the country. Above cases are indeed brutal and shocking instances of violence against transgenders.

Tara, a 28year old a migrated transgender woman from kerala who was working as Social worker with many NGO's including Sahodaran and Sinegathi, was found severely burnt outside the Pandy Bazar Police station. Tara had gone to pandy bazaar from her residence in Nungambakkam at around 4am to recharge her mobile phone at a 24 hour shop. Police from Pandy Bazaar station stopped her and accused her of soliciting customers for sex work. They confiscated her mobile phone and key of her vehicle. They took her to the police station for questioning where they allegedly assaulted her again. At around 4.30 am Tara called two of her friends Arati and Diya and told them that police had taken away her phone and key of her vehicle and arguing with her in the police station.

When the two friends came for looking Tara, at around 5 am they found Tara lying in the compound of the police station severely burnt. They immediately rushed to her and took her to the medical college, where

¹ These extract is taken from an article written by Sumathy Murthy, from Lesbit and a close supporter of New Socialist Alternative (CWI India). I a coming out, whats awaits me life or death?

doctors told that tara has suffered 95percent burns. By 10 am tara died in the hospital. Her friends are suspicious about her death because if her key is under the custody of police, then where did she got the petrol. Police also refused to show them the CCTV footage.

These kinds of cases are not isolated incidents. Not only public but the police and state are also denied transgenders rights to life and personal liberty.

In Kerala people generally think that the number of transgender people are comparatively very low than other neighboring states. They didn't consider the reality that a large number of transgender populations are migrated from Kerala to other states. Transgender survey identified 25000 transgender people in Kerala. The rejection from families and society and their own consciousness of being not approved by society are become a push factor to their migration. Neighboring states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka give more acceptances to transgender identity. Sexual RE-assignment Surgery (SRS) in Kerala is very expensive and neighboring states like Tamil Nadu offers SRS surgery for free cost. This is also a reason for migration among transgender people in Kerala.

Media violence another challenging reality

Media violence has become an increasingly challenging reality in our society. The media violence among transgenders is a complex issue. The following case analysis ,will explore will explore the intensity of the issue and illustrates the ways in which violent media can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to the marginalization of transgender individuals.

On September 22nd, 2016, transgender activist in Thiruvananthapuram held a protest march to the Fire magazine office at Kumrapuram objecting to a derogatory article about the transgender community. The article was published by the magazine under the title 'Male Prostitutes of Kochi'. Magazine also used many pictures of transgender persons without their knowledge. In Kerala many transgenders are earning a living by doing television comedy programmes, modeling taking dance classes and other self employment. Such derogatory content with pictures harm their identity. Already our society and

family are reluctant to accept transgenders; these kinds of write-ups quoting the surging sex rackets in Kochi will make transgender life more miserable.

In most of the Malayalam articles transgenders are referred as 'Binnalingam'. There is no particular Malayalam term for transgenders in our language, that's while transgender community adopts the English term transgender to denote them in Malayalam also. But most of the Malayalam articles and newspapers used the term Binna lingam for referring transgenders. Using this term also a injustice thing towards them.

Another incident regarding media violation said by Anjali Ameer, a transgender model and actress is that, during the time of International film fest in Kerala, transgender person got invitation for the first time and they got recognition. But she said that media always address transgenders by addressing their identity. For example, Transgender Anjali ameer, Transgender X, transgender Y etc. she opines that there is no need to address their gender identity in every time. Nobody address a person who belong to the so called normative gender by addressing their identity for example man X, man Y, woman X, woman Y etc. then why this discrimination for transgenders? She asked. Media has to take consideration on all these matters. Because media have great impact on society, peoples thoughts and actions

Media violence is a challenging reality that requires our attention and action. Its impact on individuals and society is complex and multifaceted. When it comes to the transgender community, media violence can exacerbate pre-existing discrimination and marginalization. It is crucial that we hold media accountable for their portrayal of transgender individuals and ensure that they are accurately represented in all forms of media.

Conclusion

The research article titled "Transgender Life and Kerala Society: Empirical Observations" sheds light on the experiences of transgender individuals within the context of Kerala society in India. The study investigates various aspects of social exclusion faced by transgender people, including their exclusion from educational rights, family life, individual rights, employment opportunities,

and the dire consequences such as engaging in sex work, suicide, and murder. The study found the transgenders' suffer from harassment and stigmatization, These exclusions contribute to the perpetuation of transgender individuals' marginalization and restrict their chances of leading a fulfilling life. They also exclusion from family life experienced by transgender individuals in Kerala. Many transgender individuals face rejection, disapproval, and abandonment by their families, which severely impacts their emotional well-being and social support networks. The absence of familial acceptance further compounds their struggles and increases the vulnerability of transgender individuals to various forms of discrimination and violence. Enforced marriages, another form of exclusion from individual rights, are discussed in the article. Transgender individuals often encounter societal pressure to conform to traditional gender norms through forced marriages. Such practices not only violate individual autonomy and personal choices but also lead to severe emotional distress and they victimize marital rape. The research also delves into the exclusion from employment opportunities faced by transgender individuals. Denial of jobs in private sector and marginalization of employment in the Private sector Consequently, many are forced into precarious forms of employment such as sex work, which is often their last resort to earn a living. This further exposes them to risks, exploitation, and violence. The article emphasizes the distressing outcomes resulting from these forms of exclusion. Transgender individuals are disproportionately affected by mental health issues, including higher rates of suicide. They are also subjected to increased violence, including hate crimes and murders, due to societal prejudices and the lack of legal protections.

Karthikeyan & Gayathri, 2016 Inclusion and Exclusion of Third Genders Social Hinderance in India. *Asian Journal in Social Science and Humanities*, 20-30

This study highlighted the multiple dimensions of social exclusion faced by transgender people findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive social reforms, legal protections, and increased awareness to address the systemic discrimination and marginalization faced by transgender individuals in Kerala and beyond.

Ethical Consent: Researchers obtained informed consent from participants before they engage in research. Informed consent involves providing comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, confidentiality measures, and voluntary participation. Participants should have the freedom to ask questions and make an informed decision about their involvement. Names of the participants are revealed in this a study as per the informed consent from the participants.

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