

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION OF TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Ms. Rakhee B Chavan
PhD. Research Scholar,
School of Law, Sandip University,

Dr. Harita Shinde Bangali
Associate Professor, Research Guide
School of Law, Sandip University,

ABSTRACT –

Social exclusion and inclusion of the transgender community is an important aspect. Social exclusion refers to the marginalization, discrimination, and lack of access to resources that transgender individuals may experience due to their gender identity. On the other hand, social inclusion refers to creating an inclusive and accepting society that values and affirms transgender individuals. A critical analysis of the social exclusion faced by the transgender community reveals several key issues. Firstly, transgender individuals often face high rates of discrimination and prejudice in various aspects of society, such as employment, education, healthcare, and housing. This exclusion may result in limited job opportunities, higher rates of mental health issues, and increased vulnerability to poverty. Furthermore, social exclusion also manifests in the denial of legal rights and protections for transgender people. Access to legal documents, healthcare services, and gender-affirming procedures can be challenging, and transgender individuals may face obstacles in changing their legal gender marker or obtaining appropriate identification documents.

Transphobia and hate crimes further reinforce social exclusion, making transgender individuals more vulnerable to harassment, assault, and even murder. This widespread discrimination contributes to a hostile environment that limits the inclusion and well-being of transgender people. The Judiciary plays a crucial role in ensuring the social inclusion and protection of the rights of the transgender community. However, there are positive steps being taken towards social inclusion, with efforts to challenge social norms, change legislation, and create inclusive spaces. Continued advocacy and education are crucial in creating a more inclusive society for everyone, including the transgender community.

Keywords: Transgender, Marginalization, Transphobia, Discrimination, Hate Crimes.

Introduction:

Social inclusion and exclusion of transgender individuals is a complex and critical issue within society today. Transgender individuals often face discrimination, stigma, and exclusion from various social, economic, and political opportunities due to their gender identity. The struggle for acceptance and equal rights for transgender individuals has been a significant focus of advocacy and social movements worldwide. Understanding the background and context of social inclusion and exclusion of transgender individuals involves exploring the systemic barriers they face, the impact of societal attitudes and norms, as well as the efforts towards creating more inclusive and supportive environments for transgender individuals to thrive. Trans people face a legal system that often does not protect us from discrimination based on our gender identity.¹

Factors Contributing to Social Exclusion:

The social exclusion of transgender individuals is influenced by a multitude of factors that contribute to their marginalization within society. Transgender individuals often face discrimination and prejudice based on their gender identity. This manifests in various forms such as lack of access to employment opportunities, healthcare services, education, and housing. Many legal and policy frameworks do not adequately protect the rights of transgender individuals, leading to their exclusion from certain rights and protections. This includes issues such as legal recognition of gender identity, anti-discrimination laws, and healthcare coverage. Transgender individuals may experience rejection from family, friends, and broader social networks, leading to isolation and lack of emotional support. This lack of social support can contribute to feelings of exclusion and alienation. Discrimination in the workplace and limited job opportunities can result in economic insecurity for transgender individuals. This economic marginalization further contributes to their social exclusion. Transgender individuals often face barriers to accessing healthcare services, including gender-affirming care. This can lead to physical and mental health disparities, further exacerbating their social exclusion. The experiences of social exclusion for transgender individuals are often compounded by other forms of marginalization based on factors such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and disability.

¹ Human Rights Campaign, Understanding the Transgender Community, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/understanding-the-transgender-community> (last visited June 3, 2024).

Intersectionality plays a significant role in shaping the extent of exclusion faced by transgender individuals. By understanding and addressing these factors contributing to social exclusion, society can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for transgender individuals to thrive.

Impact of Social Exclusion:

The impact of social exclusion on transgender individuals is profound and far-reaching, affecting various aspects of their well-being and quality of life. Social exclusion can have a significant impact on the mental health of transgender individuals, leading to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide. The lack of social support and acceptance can exacerbate feelings of loneliness, isolation, and worthlessness. Transgender individuals who experience social exclusion may face barriers to accessing healthcare services, including gender-affirming care. This can result in untreated gender dysphoria, increased risk of chronic health conditions, and overall poorer physical health outcomes. Social exclusion often limits the economic opportunities available to transgender individuals, leading to financial insecurity, inadequate housing, and lack of access to resources. Economic strain can further perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalization. Social exclusion can impact educational attainment and employment opportunities for transgender individuals. Discrimination in educational settings and the workplace can hinder their ability to pursue higher education, secure stable employment, and reach their full potential. Transgender individuals who are socially excluded may face increased risks of harassment, violence, and discrimination in various settings, including public spaces, healthcare facilities, and housing. The lack of social acceptance can compromise their safety and security. The cumulative impact of social exclusion on transgender individuals can result in diminished overall well-being, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Feeling marginalized and unsupported can limit their ability to lead fulfilling and authentic lives. Social, economic, cultural and political aspects of exclusion enforce deprivations of the basic amenities of life.² By recognizing and addressing the impact of social exclusion on transgender individuals, society can strive towards creating more inclusive and affirming environments that promote their well-being, safety, and full participation in all aspects of life.

²<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2928103/>(last visited on 4th June 2024)

Constitutional and Legal Framework:

The constitutional rights related to social exclusion and inclusion of transgender individuals in India are primarily governed by the Constitution of India and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019. In India, the legal framework surrounding the social inclusion and exclusion of the transgender community has undergone significant changes, particularly in recent years. Transgender people are frequently denied legal recognition of their preferred gender or face abusive requirements such as forced sterilization, treatment or divorce to obtain it, without which they suffer exclusion and marginalization.³ Here are some key points under Indian law:

Constitution of India, 1950:

Article 14 of the Constitution ensures equal protection of laws for all citizens, including transgender individuals. The Act prohibits discrimination against transgender persons in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and healthcare. Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. The Act ensures that transgender individuals have access to healthcare services, including gender-affirming surgeries, and prohibits denial of inheritance rights due to gender identity.

NALSA Judgement (2014):

The Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment in the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) vs. Union of India case. The Court recognized transgender people as a 'third gender' and affirmed their fundamental rights under the Constitution. It directed the government to treat transgender persons as socially and economically backward classes, ensuring they have access to reservations in jobs and educational institutions.

The Constitution of India gives Fundamental Rights to every citizen, some F.R.I. is available to non-citizens as well, but practically the trans get denied these rights.⁴

³ Biswaranjan Jena, Navaneeta Rath & Namita Mohanty, *Social Exclusion to Inclusive Framework: The Third Gender Community under Transformation* (2023).

⁴ Asst. Prof. Rohini Mudholkar, Social Inclusivity of Trans Community: A Challenge Before Binary Human Society, D.Y. Patil Law College Blog (Dec. 30, 2021), <https://law.dypvp.edu.in/blogs/social-inclusivity-of-trans-community-a-challenge-before-binary-human-society>.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019:

This Act aims to protect the rights of transgender people and promote their welfare.

Key provisions include: Prohibition of discrimination against transgender persons in education, employment, healthcare, and access to public goods and services, Recognition of the right to self-perceived gender identity, Issuance of a certificate of identity for transgender persons. Establishment of National and State Transgender Councils to advise on policies and measures to improve their welfare, Provision for penalties and punishments for offenses against transgender individuals. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 recognizes the right of individuals to self-identify as male, female, or transgender without the need for any medical or psychological certification. The Act mandates the government to provide inclusive and accessible healthcare services for transgender persons, including sex reassignment surgery (SRS) and hormonal therapy. The Act prohibits discrimination against transgender individuals in matters of employment and education. There are provisions for inclusion and employment opportunities within both governmental and private sectors. The Act encourages the formulation of welfare schemes and programs for the transgender community, aimed at improving their living conditions, providing social security, and ensuring their participation in societal affairs. Transgender persons have the right to have their self-identified gender recognized in official documents, such as the Aadhaar card, passport, and voter ID.

While these legal measures have been put in place to promote social inclusion, the implementation of these laws remains a challenge. Transgender persons in India still face social stigma, discrimination, and exclusion in various aspects of daily life. There's a need for continued advocacy, awareness, and enforcement of these laws to ensure true inclusion and equality for the transgender community. The right to recognition as a person before the law is guaranteed in numerous international human rights conventions, and is a fundamental aspect of affirming the dignity and worth of each person.⁵

Efforts towards Social Inclusion:

⁵ Mohanty, Hitabhilash and Hota, Susampad, In The Wake Of Equality – The Realization of The Rights of Transgender Persons in India (March 20, 2021). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3808475> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3808475>

Efforts towards social inclusion of transgender individuals have gained significant attention in recent years, recognizing the importance of creating a more tolerant and inclusive society. One essential step towards social inclusion is the establishment of legal protections for transgender individuals. This includes anti-discrimination laws, recognition of gender identity in official documents, and policies that ensure equal rights in areas such as employment, housing, and healthcare. Promoting awareness and understanding of transgender issues is crucial for fostering acceptance and inclusion. Educational initiatives in schools, workplaces, and communities help debunk myths and stereotypes, leading to greater empathy and support for transgender individuals. Ensuring access to gender-affirming healthcare is critical for the well-being of transgender individuals. Efforts to improve healthcare services, enhance insurance coverage for gender transition procedures, and train healthcare providers in transgender-affirming care are integral to social inclusion. Transgender rights organizations play a vital role in advocating for policy changes, raising awareness of transgender issues, and amplifying the voices of transgender individuals in decision-making processes. Increasing transgender representation in advocacy groups and public forums helps ensure that their experiences and needs are properly addressed.

Building supportive communities where transgender individuals can find acceptance, camaraderie, and resources is essential for social inclusion. LGBTQ+ centers, support groups, and online forums provide valuable spaces for connection and empowerment. Creating a more inclusive workforce involves implementing non-discrimination policies, fostering diversity and inclusion initiatives, and promoting diverse representation at all levels of an organization. Offering employment opportunities and support for transgender individuals can significantly enhance their social integration. Being transgender is not a mental illness. But people who are transgender face unique challenges, such as gender dysphoria and discrimination, which can affect their mental health.⁶ Transgender individuals often face mental health challenges due to societal stigma and discrimination. Providing access to mental health services, counseling, and support groups tailored to the needs of transgender individuals is crucial for their well-being and social inclusion.

⁶ <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/21963-transgender-ensuring-mental-health>(last visited on 4th June 2024)

Overall, efforts towards social inclusion of transgender individuals involve a multi-faceted approach encompassing legal protections, education, healthcare access, advocacy, community support, employment opportunities, and mental health support. By addressing these areas comprehensively, society can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for transgender individuals.

Critical Analysis:

Achieving full social inclusion for transgender individuals is a complex and ongoing process that faces various gaps and challenges. While progress has been made in many regions to establish legal protections for transgender individuals, there are still significant gaps in legislation. Inconsistencies in anti-discrimination laws, limited recognition of gender identity, and lack of comprehensive healthcare coverage for gender-affirming procedures pose legal barriers to full social inclusion. Transgender individuals often face pervasive societal stigma and discrimination, which can manifest in various forms such as harassment, violence, micro aggressions, and exclusion. Overcoming deep-rooted prejudices and changing societal attitudes towards gender diversity remains a significant challenge in achieving full social inclusion.

Access to quality and affirming healthcare services remains a critical challenge for many transgender individuals. Limited availability of gender-affirming care, high costs of procedures, lack of knowledgeable healthcare providers, and insurance coverage exclusions can impede the well-being and full integration of transgender individuals into society.

Transgender individuals are disproportionately affected by economic disparities, including higher rates of unemployment, workplace discrimination, and poverty. Limited employment opportunities, unequal pay, and lack of workplace accommodations for gender transition contribute to economic challenges that hinder full social inclusion.

The mental health of transgender individuals is often impacted by the stress of navigating societal barriers, facing discrimination, and coping with identity-related challenges. High rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide risk highlight the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support tailored to the specific needs of transgender individuals. Building strong support networks and inclusive communities for transgender individuals is crucial for fostering social inclusion. However, many face isolation, rejection from family and peers, and limited access to affirming spaces where they can feel accepted and supported, creating significant barriers to full

social integration. Transgender individuals with intersecting identities, such as trans people of color, disabled trans individuals, or trans migrants, face compounded forms of discrimination and marginalization. Transgender persons have faced several issues of discrimination, historically, like exclusion from their families, absences of dignified livelihood, and inadequate access to health, shelter, welfare and employment.⁷

Hence, achieving full social inclusion for transgender individuals requires comprehensive efforts to address legal gaps, combat stigma and discrimination, improve healthcare access, tackle economic disparities, enhance mental health support, promote social support networks, and recognize the intersectional nature of challenges faced by diverse transgender communities. Continued advocacy, policy changes, education, and community support are key to overcoming these gaps and moving towards a more inclusive and equitable society for all gender-diverse individuals.

Recommendations:

Enhancing social inclusion for transgender individuals requires a multi-faceted approach, encompassing research, policy-making, education, healthcare, and employment. Here are detailed recommendations for future research and policy-making:

A. Encourage comprehensive and inclusive data collection methods in national surveys and censuses to better understand the demographics and needs of transgender populations. Conduct long-term studies to track the health, economic, and social outcomes of transgender individuals over time.

B. Healthcare Access Research: Investigate barriers to healthcare access, including financial, geographical, and social obstacles. Study the mental health challenges faced by transgender

⁷ welfare of transgender persons in India: slew of measures by central - <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2022/jun/doc202263068801.pdf> (last visited on 5th June 2024)

individuals and the efficacy of different intervention strategies. Research the long-term outcomes of hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgeries to improve medical guidelines and practices.

C. To Conduct studies on the prevalence of discrimination and violence against transgender individuals in various settings, such as workplaces, schools, and healthcare facilities. Analyze the effectiveness of existing anti-discrimination laws and policies on reducing incidents of discrimination and violence.

D. Research the experiences of transgender students in educational institutions and the impact of inclusive policies on their well-being and academic performance. To study the impact of teacher training programs on the school climate and the inclusivity of educational environments.

E. Implement and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that explicitly include gender identity and expression in all areas, including employment, housing, healthcare, and public accommodations. Strengthen hate crime laws to provide clear protections against crimes motivated by gender identity and ensure vigorous enforcement.

F. Mandate coverage for gender-affirming healthcare services, including hormone therapy, surgeries, and mental health support, under public and private health insurance plans. Require training programs for healthcare providers on the needs of transgender patients to reduce discrimination and improve the quality of care.

G. Develop and implement inclusive curricula that address gender diversity and the contributions of transgender individuals to society. Enforce policies that allow transgender students to use the facilities that correspond with their gender identity and protect them from bullying and harassment.

H. Inclusive Workplace Policies promote workplace policies that ensure equal opportunities for transgender employees, including non-discrimination clauses, diversity training, inclusive health benefits, and support for transitioning employees. Develop specific job training and employment

programs aimed at improving employment opportunities and economic outcomes for transgender individuals.

I. Establish and support community centers and organizations that provide resources, support, and safe spaces for transgender individuals. Facilitate peer support programs to help transgender individuals connect with others who share similar experiences and challenges.

J. Awareness Campaigns: Implement public awareness campaigns to educate the broader community about transgender issues, reduce stigma, and promote acceptance. Encourage accurate and positive representation of transgender individuals in media and entertainment to foster a more inclusive society.

K. Establish mechanisms for regular review and monitoring of policies and programs to ensure they are meeting the needs of transgender individuals. Create channels through which transgender individuals can provide feedback on public services and policies, ensuring their voices are heard and considered.

By incorporating these recommendations, researchers and policymakers can work together to create more inclusive environments and address the specific challenges faced by transgender individuals.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the social exclusion and inclusion of the transgender community are complex issues that require critical analysis. It is evident that transgender individuals often face marginalization, discrimination, and violence due to societal attitudes and norms. Efforts towards inclusion must involve challenging systemic barriers, promoting education and awareness, and advocating for policies that protect the rights of transgender individuals. True progress can only be achieved through empathy, understanding, and active support for the transgender community in all aspects of life.

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