

Attitude of Society on Inclusion and Exclusion of Transgender

*Dr.Kalyani Kenneth, Professor, Department of Counselling Psychology, Madras School of Social Work, Chennai, Tamilnadu. kalyanikenneth@mssw.in, 9940290872.

**Ms. KajalJanardhanan, Research Scholar, Department of Counselling Psychology, Madras School of Social Work, Chennai, Tamilnadu. Kajal27310@gmail.com

Abstract:

“Transgender is generally described as an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behavior does not conform to their biological sex.” The term “transgender” is not only limited to persons whose genitals are intermixed but it is a blanket term used to refer to persons with identities that do not get along with the strict dual categories of man and woman and whose gender identity and expression differs from the conventional norms expected from their birth sex. The identity of an individual is often determined by the moral dictates and judgments of the society. The purpose of this research is to find out the root cause of stereotypes, prejudices and myths related to transgenders. The research was conducted utilizing qualitative analysis with 146 participants. One of the major key findings of this research is the prevalence of the role parents and peers play in thought formation and negative attitude towards the transgenders. From the findings, it is imperative for us as a part of society to break the time old conditioned norms, negative attitudes towards transgenders and create a world of love and harmony with the inclusion of all the people in the society.

Key Words: Attitude, Exclusion, Inclusion, Prejudice, Stereotypes and Transgender.

I. Introduction

The identity of an individual is often determined by the moral dictates and judgments of the society. However, individuals who seek to challenge these with their personalities, sexual orientations and inclinations are often shunned, abandoned and treated as the “other”. Abandoned by families and ridiculed by negative stigmas, they are usually left with no other option, than resorting to begging or singing in weddings, to make a living. Even with such vulnerability to harassment and violence, their agony mostly remains unnoticed. This only indicates the extent of helplessness and neglect this community faces.

Conventional distinction of human gender into male and female is exclusively based on the biological design of their genitalia. However, in reality, there are people who do not fit into this custom and defy the biological binary. These are the “transgender” people. The dictionary meaning of the prefix "trans" means "beyond," "across," or "over." However, "transgender" does not simply signify a gender that crosses the borderline. Often, this term is not properly understood by the general population. It is a broad term to circumscribe all individuals who live a major portion of their lives manifesting an innate sense of gender which deviates from suppositions of their birth sex.

In India, some of the regional terms are used to represent the community. For example, the term “*kothi*” signifies a range of feminine identified people, who have been assigned male gender at birth. Similarly, other prominent regional and trans-regional identities representing this community are *hijras*, *aravani*, *jogtas/jogappas*, and *shiv-shaktis*.

Social Exclusion Framework is increasingly used in highlighting the issues and problems faced by disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups. It provides a multidimensional and dynamic framework that focuses attention on both the causes and consequences of social disadvantage. Social Exclusion Framework is seen as having particular salience in addressing the barriers to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, particularly where these relate to exclusionary social relations and institutions. Adapting the Social Exclusion Framework to Hijras/TG women, one can understand how TG communities have been excluded from effectively participating in social and cultural life, economy, and politics and decision-making processes. This framework helps to illustrate the multiple forms of oppression faced by Hijras/TG communities.

The main purpose of the study is to reach to the roots and gain insight about the factors which later turn into discrimination. The stereotypes, myths and prejudices passed on from peers, parents and families are studied. The primary objective of this study was to gather views of young adults about transgenders

Objectives:

- To learn about the perception of young adults about the transgender community.
- To identify the underlying factors which lead to discrimination
- To understand from where and how did they first gather the prejudices, stereotypes and myths about the transgender community.
- To create awareness about the transgender community and the problems they might face because of our behaviour.
- To create an environment where everybody feels safe and lives in peace and harmony.

All research studies are subjected to certain limitations, although these may differ with respect to topic, data availability, and the methods of conducting research. The findings of present study are subjected to following limitations.

- The data obtained from this study are limited to some districts of the following states – Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttarakhand. Thus the results of this study are applicable only to these states.
- Since the young adults are still at a phase where they are discovering and learning, gathering more knowledge about several things that are going around them, views might change in a given period of time.
- The data has been collected from only six states of India. Therefore the outcome of the study cannot be generalized.
- The response was collected under the assumption that the information given by the respondents are authentic.
- The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic restricted the scope and sample size for this study.

II. Review of Literature

In researching transgender people, it became very clear that very little research has been done in this area and the existing research has only begun to emerge in the last few years. Research on the lives of transgender individuals (i.e., “people who have gender identities, expressions, or behaviours not traditionally associated with their birth sex;” Gender Education and Advocacy, Inc., 2001, para. 3) suggests that they are frequently victims of discrimination.

Indeed, the pervasiveness of discrimination against transgender individuals has led some to conclude that the majority of transgender men (i.e., female-to-male transgender individuals) and women (i.e., male-to-female transgender individuals) can expect to experience some form of discrimination in their lifetimes (Kenagy, 2005;

Lombardi, 2009).

Transgender individuals may experience institutional discrimination (i.e., structural biases against a social group that are entrenched in institutions' policies and procedures; Morrison, Morrison, Harriman, & Jewell, 2008) in the health care system (Kenagy, 2005), as well as with respect to housing and employment (National Centre for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force [NCTE], 2011).

In Kenagy's (2005) needs assessment surveys of transgender individuals in Philadelphia and Delaware (N = 182), approximately one third of the sample reported being denied healthcare due to their transgender identity.

Furthermore, the results of a recent large scale survey of transgender people in the United States (N = 6,436) found that the rate of unemployment in the sample was double that of the general American population and almost one fifth were denied housing due to their transgender identity (NCTE, 2011).

III. Research Methodology

Researched area

The research area was supposed to be conducted in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh and the few villages surrounding them but due to covid19 and the commencement of lockdown. The research was conducted in online mode as offline mode was impossible. The participants belong from the districts of the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttarakhand.

Methods of data collection

- **Sampling:** The research was conducted on 146 participants of which 51 are males 94 are females and 1 belongs to the other category. The focus group of this study was young adults, their age ranging from 18 to 30. Primary data was collected using questionnaires through Google forms.
- **Questionnaire:** It is a set of questions for the purpose of gathering information from the respondents. It is basically designed to acquire data according to researcher's requirements. Questionnaire consisted of both open ended and close ended questions. Some Likert Scale questions ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 7 (Strongly disagree) were also included to measure the factors. A link by using Google form was sent to the respondents.
- **Data Collection Process:** The methodology followed was a questionnaire-based survey among the young adults of seven different states. The entire

research is based on qualitative research. The items on the questionnaire were formed after consulting relevant literature and by field experience.

IV. Result and Discussion

1. Communication with transgenders

Table 1: showing distribution of respondent's communication with transgenders.

	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Unsure if i have met any	33	22.6
0 definitely	07	04.8
1-5 definitely	67	45.9
5-10 definitely	13	8.9
More than 10 definitely	26	17.8

Approximately how many transgender people have you met?

146 responses

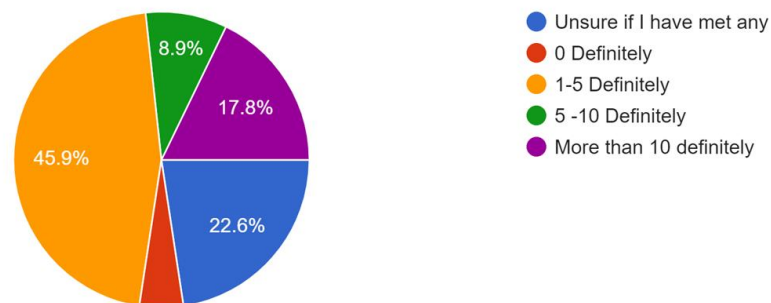


Figure 1: Distribution showing communication with transgenders.

Source: Primary Data

Inference

According to the above given information 22.6% of respondents are unsure if they have met any transgenders, 4.8% are sure they have never met any, 45.9% have met 1 to 5 definitely, 8.9% have met 5 to 10 definitely and 17.8% have met more than 10 definitely.

2. Response when encountered with a transgender.

Table 2: Distribution showing response when encountered a transgender

Response	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	43	29.5
No	62	42.5
Just greet them or smile at them from a distance	41	28.1

Have you ever been in a conversation with them?

146 responses

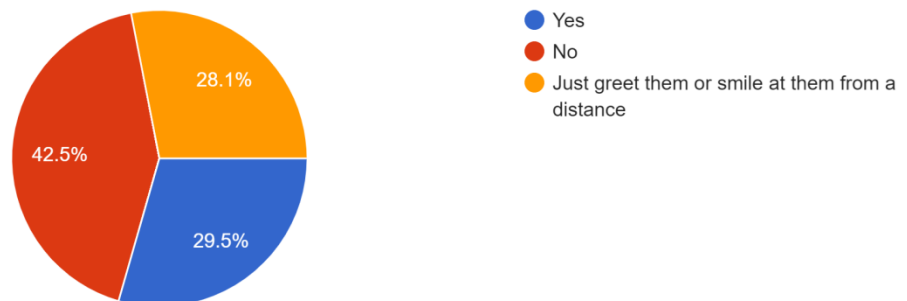


Figure 2: Distribution showing response when encountered a transgender

Source: Primary Data

Inference

According to the above given information 29.5% of respondents have been in the conversation with transgenders, 42.5 have never been in the conversation with transgenders and 28.1% have just greeted them or smiled from a distance.

3. Restrictions posed by parents

Table 3: Distribution showing restrictions posed by parents

Response	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	13	8.9
No	114	78.1
Sometimes	19	13

Do your parents pose any restrictions on meeting or greeting them?
146 responses

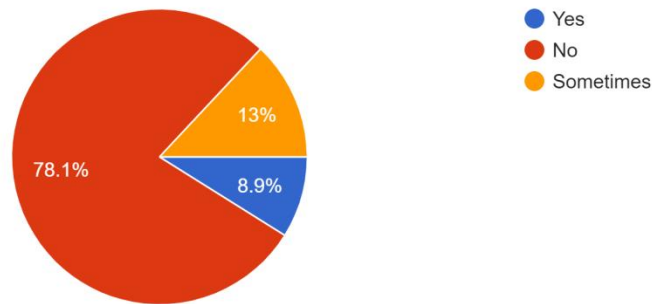


Figure 3: Distribution showing restrictions posed by parents

Source: Primary Data

Inference

According to the above given information 8.9% of respondents' parents posed restrictions on them as to greet or meet transgenders, 78.1% respondents mentioned that their parents did not pose any restrictions and 13% stated that their parents posed certain restrictions sometimes. Therefore we gather that most parents do not pose any restrictions.

Open ended questions:

Q1. What do you understand by the term "Transgender"?

Almost every participant had an idea about transgenders. A majority of the participants stated that they are humans just like us and they are as much an integral part of the society as cisgenders. The respondents have also stated how new 21st century upcoming TV series and movies have helped them gain more knowledge about LGBTQIA+ community, a sneak peek into their lives and how with social acceptance support we can make their lives so much easier.

Q2. How would you describe them?

Respondents have described them as loud, rebellious, masculine physique, people who wear excessive makeup, arrogant, happy go lucky, confident and some said they are highly blessed and beautiful.

Q3. What are the common prejudices you have heard about them from your friends/ parents/society?

Most of the respondents stated that the most common prejudices are- that their blessings and curses are very effective and one shouldn't upset them. Few of them

have accepted that they have been conditioned by society since childhood into believing the myths but they are open to changing their mindset and looking at the other side of the story as well. Some of the positive prejudices encountered are as follows:

“I have only heard positive things about them and also they are very polite if you welcome them nicely and they always bless other people.”

“They are the same as everyone and they are considered as the blessed people and everyone should take blessings from them.”

“Blessing of God, whose good wishes can help you succeed in life”

There are even very disturbing prejudices respondents have come across, some of them are enlisted below.

“They kidnap children and convert them into transgender”

“Transgender = Prostitute”

“It is an illness”

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Research on the attitude of the society towards socially excluded communities is one of the most interesting areas for a researcher as it does not only provide significant information but also at the same time helps understand the community as a whole, which can play a positive role in bringing changes not only in the Indian society but also in the global scenario.

In addition, when we become aware of the impacts we can have on other people's lives and how our behaviour determines their wellbeing can be a positive factor for bringing peace within the society that can contribute towards living a solidarity and harmony life and if we could achieve it would be one of the greatest achievements towards humankind where equality speaks for all.

This research concludes that young adults are accepting and welcoming the TG community back into the society after being shunned for so long. Many respondents stated that they only treat them nicely because they are scared that they might curse them for life, on the other hand one respondent shared a personal narrative of how he performed really well in a job interview with their blessing.

Social acceptance plays a vital role in everyone's life. We as a part of our society

need to bring the necessary change and make this world a better place to live in irrespective of one's sexual orientation.

Some suggestions, which can be carried out for further research, are as given below:

- More research is needed to examine the nature of the relationship between them and the mainstream society.
- Appropriate legal laws are needed to ensure their rights and justice.
- Existing welfare schemes must be evaluated timely for effective results.
- Promoting equality with the aim of achieving cultural change, and thereby acceptance of trans people in society.
- Investigating the need for, and feasibility of, specific trans services in areas such as housing and health and social care.
- Spreading awareness through social media, movies, TV series etc.
- Greater understanding and constant support for active participation of Hijras in the society. Hijras/Transgender women require understanding and support of the government, health care Professionals, general public as well as their family members.
- We need to understand and accept that humans are diverse. People have the right to be what they are and what they want to be. For transgender people, the same holds true.

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