

An Exploration to the Educational Issues of Transgender

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Abstract

The paper intended to explore the educational problem of transgender community and to explore the views of common people towards the education of transgender. The study is exploratory in nature. Snowball sampling technique was used to select 20 transgender people as well as convenient sampling technique was used to select 50 parents of common children as participants for the study. Qualitative technique was used to analyze the data which were gathered by semi-structured interview schedule. The data were collected from Presidency division of West Bengal. The study explores different educational problems like admission problem, lack of conducive school and class room environment, drop out problem, lack of financial facilities, lack of parental awareness, too much giving importance to the gender expression etc. However common people have the understanding that education can only able to provide better life to the transgender.

Introduction

Transgender persons are those who have a gender identity, or gender expression, that differs from their assigned sex (Altilio and Green, 2011). Gender expression is the outer part of an individual and what society is expected. Society is always giving importance to the gender expression. But individual remain concern with gender identity. It is the inner sense to be male, female, transgender or transsexual person (NALSA Judgment, 2014). In 2011 census, there are around 4.9 lakhs trans-gender in the country, where the literacy percentage is 56.07%.

Every individual have some basic rights and transgender persons are not an exception. In India transgender is known as third gender and has been declared by the Supreme Court. On 15th April 2014, the landmark judgment in National Legal Services Authority v Union of India and others (Writ Petition No 400 of 2012 with Writ Petition No. 604 of 2013) was passed. Even India have Transgender Person Bill also. Transgender have different rights like reservation in the appointment, they can choose their own gender identity, have the voting rights, getting citizenship card, different scholarships for education, pensions, getting passports, health benefits and other welfare benefits. But still they are facing different harassments in the public places, abusement from the families, neighbor which leads them to doing begging, sex work, taking money from the people, dance in different occasions etc. to earn money and lead their life. Besides all these problems presently many transgender are working in a reputed place like Manabi Bandyopadhyay working as the first transgender principal to a government college in West Bengal, Amruta Alpesh Soni as the advocacy officer for the states of Punjab, Haryana and Chhattisgarh for the National AIDS Control Project (Rajkumar 2016) etc. So quality education of transgender can give them a better life and people can think positively

towards them. (Tabassum& Jamil, 2014). So different policies and judgment are not enough rather its implementation is more important.

In India it had also found that there are less number of research studies have conducted on transgender issues specially from their view points that what kind of problem they are facing in continuing their education as well as about the views of parents who have common children towards the education of transgender. Thus the present study have tried to explore about the educational problem of transgender from their lenses as well as the views of the common people about the education of transgender.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To explore the educational problems of transgender community in West Bengal.
- 2) To explore the views of common people towards the education of transgender persons.

Methodology

The present research adopted an exploratory research. 20 transgender persons and 50 common parents from the Presidency division of West Bengal were selected as sample for the study. Five districts are there under Presidency division. They are Kolkata, South 24 Paraganas, North 24 Paraganas, Howrah and Nadia. Snow ball sampling technique for transgender and convenient sampling technique for common parents were used to select the participants. Data were collected by the help of semi-structured interview schedule. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively by taking the help of content analysis and critical analysis had been made from that data.

Major Findings and Discussions

For the first objective a semi-structured interview was conducted to understand the problem of transgender people in accessing and continuing their education. We know that transgender have separate rights to bring them in the mainstream and prepare them at par with other men and women. Participants have clearly mentioned that their problems started from the **admission procedure in the educational institutes** especially from the higher secondary level. The reason behind this is that their gender identity and expression is not matched with their sex. This stereotype has been made by the society. Participants have mentioned that during the time of the admission in the higher studies, many times they have to take admission as male students. It creates conflict among themselves, thus they find difficult to adjust in the institutes. Legal recognitions is the another big challenges for transgender persons in pursuing education (Tabasum and Jamil, 2014). But in the NALSA judgment (2014) it had clearly mentioned that there is a provision to change the name of the transgender in the government gazette and they get the proper transgender identity card. But till now in many forms there is no proper column for transgender. While interacting with the participants, 20% transgender only have idea that there is the provision to change their name in the government gazette and about the transgender identity card. It is also clearly mentioned in the 'Right of Transgender Person Bill' (2015) that any educational institutes should have to take admission of transgender students without making any kind of discrimination. But violation takes place.

Another major problem is **lack of conducive school and class room environment** which acts as barrier for the transgender students to continue their education. It is clearly mentioned in the 'Right of Transgender Person Bill' 2015 that educational institutions should have to take admission of transgender students without any discrimination. It is

also written that all educational institutes should allow any transgender students in the sports, recreation and leisure activities as per with other students. With this all the educational institute must have separate toilet facilities and rest room for transgender students. Thus in nutshell it can be said that institute must be gender inclusive. Participants have said that they are aware of all these facts, but the reality is different. There is no such conducive environment available within the premises of the educational institute to favor the transgender students. The problems mentioned by the transgender people were unavailability of transgender free toilet facilities, bullying by the peers, harassment by the teachers as well as by non-teaching staff members, not allowing to wear girls' attire, lack of vocational activities, improper seating arrangement etc. All these problems lead them to leave their education.

Social exclusion is another major problem expressed by the participants in continuing their education. They have mentioned that they have been thrown out by the family members, neighbours, peers, and other society people due to their different gender identity (Omar, Jabeen and Sherazi, 2021). They were being tortured by their parents as well as siblings also. They under gone with the question that 'Who am I. Why people are indifferent to me'. They even do not able to understand whom to say all these problems. This leads to the development of low self-concept, that have the impact in their academics also. Participants have mentioned that many times common parents did not allow their children to play with the transgender students.

Drop-out is another important barrier for the transgender students in continuing their education. This problem mainly started from the secondary level. Except 15%, the other transgender have studied till secondary or higher secondary level. They even wanted to continue their education if they get the proper chance to continue. They have the understanding about the importance of the education but the non-supporting behavior of the society as well as the parents forced them to drop-out from education. Participants have mentioned about another side. Many times parents did not like to send their transgender wards to schools due to the fear of the society. Teachers also have lack of expertise to handle this transgender issue. Participants have mentioned that institutes make them feel that institutes are not bothered even to talk about transgender issues as well as educational institutes do not have any special guidance and counseling cell for transgender students. All these factors make a transgender persons forced to go for drop out from the educational institutes.

The next problem comes with the **lack of the financial support** from family, government and even from NGOs that becomes difficult for the transgender students in continuing their education. Participants have clearly mentioned that family members were not very serious about their education (Roy Choudhury, Bhutra & Pathak, 2016). Parents were more concerned about their gender issues. Most of the participants were from rural areas and have low family income forced the transgender persons to discontinue their education. Presently in a very isolated manner government is helping for the education of the transgender persons but that is very less. As well as whatever financial assistance transgender students are getting in the name of scholarship, they are getting for the merit but not for their gender. Participants have also said that most of the NGOs are not working in the field of education rather they are only working for blood testing for HIV. Lastly all the respondents have said that they know very clearly that education is their

basic right and it is very important for their own development and the development of their own community.

Thus we can conclude that though Supreme Court is providing several judgments, marked as the socially and educationally backward class, and giving reservation in education and job to this marginalized group of people. With this, 'Right of Transgender Person Bill 2015' very clearly mentioned about the different educational rights for this group of people. But lack of awareness is still there among the transgender people as well as the other people in the society. In the present situation also they are being isolated from the society and their rights are being somehow violated. Participants have said that though government is working but in slow process. Government must take initiative to aware the common people about this transgender issues. Educational institutes, teachers, parents must participate in a leading role to understand this issue. At the same time awareness among the transgender people is also very necessary. Otherwise everything will be go in vain.

From the views of the common people related to the education of transgender people 43% have said their children can have transgender friends and it is not a problem at all. All the parents have said that transgender students must have reservation for education and job. If not throughout life but atleast at the initial period. The legal procedure must not be too lengthy for the transgender persons. 95% of the parents have agreed that only proper education can make a change in the life of transgender. For this all the educational institutes must be gender inclusive and it has been agreed by 91% of the parents. They have mentioned that teachers must be well aware and must know about how to handle transgender issues. 86% parents have also agreed that transgender are facing inequalities in different field like in education, in public places etc.

Thus it must be a two way process where society must accept transgender as what they are. Society must accept the gender identity and give them love. Treat them as human resources of the nation. Transgender also must have the wish to join in the mainstream. So good education can provide healthy life to transgender.

Suggestions

- Every transgender has right to know about their rights to education and job. It's the role of the government to bring the norms and opportunities to the public by adopting various ways.
- It will be more useful if the educational institutions conduct periodical programmes- if possible by the transgender –to make the students and the teachers to understand about the third gender.
- Media both electronic and print must highlight the educational status of the transgender persons in the positive manner rather not keeping them in poor light.
- States and Central governments should plan social welfare schemes for third gender community and run a public awareness campaign to erase social stigma.

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