

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF TRANSGENDER/HIJRAS

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Abstract : The Transgender/ Hijra community has a very low socio- economic status due to non acceptance and discrimination by their own families and society. Education is one of the strongest weapons against oppression. This study attempts to answer the question: Is education elevating the economic empowerment of Transgender/Hijras? Economic empowerment is a pre-requirement for sustainable growth. It is crucial for Transgender/Hijras in supporting their rights and making them capable of having control over their lives and making an impact in society. The population of this study is Transgender/Hijras of age group of 18 years to above 50 years in Lucknow. The sample size is 38 Transgender/Hijras. The data was collected through in- depth interviews. Case study and focus group discussion methods were used. The findings show that literate Transgender /Hijras are economically empowered than illiterate Transgender/Hijras.

Index Terms – Transgender, Hijras, Economic Empowerment, Literate, Illiterate

I. INTRODUCTION

Transgender/Hijras are marginalized and not treated as part of our society. They become different from the rest of males and females because of their gender identity crisis.

Transgender /Hijra children are given to the Hijra community by parents under the influence of society or due to fear of social stigmatization. These children remains illiterate as there is no provision of education in their Guru's family. Transgender /Hijra children face humiliation during their coming out process at puberty stage from their families, neighbours and at educational institutions. They are kicked out or compelled to leave their homes, hence their education is stopped abruptly. Due to lack of education or inadequate education they have no employment opportunities, this leads to their poor economic condition. Now their condition has changed a little bit after the judgement of the Supreme Court of India in the case of NALSA vs. Union of India, as they have got recognition as the third gender.

Economic Status of Transgender/Hijras

The poor economic status of Transgender/Hijras is due to the following reasons - their expulsion from their homes deprives them of education, property rights and other benefits. They cannot obtain proper jobs due to illiteracy or a very low level of education. The repercussion of social stigma and prejudice is that there is no availability of jobs and they are not even-hired for petty jobs. The prejudiced, disgusting and humiliating atmosphere at the work place forces them to give up their jobs or to be barred by employers; hence they do not retain their jobs for long time. Their talent goes waste because of inequality in their appointments, promotions and salary. This harassing condition leads them into poor mental health and addiction of substance abuse which further causes the discontinuity of their jobs. The negligible opportunity of employment for the Transgender/Hijra people becomes the main reason of their indulgence in prostitution and begging. Generally Transgender/Hijras as sex workers do not get respect in their own community, but hijras are making more money through commercial sex work rather than through badhai and begging. Transgender/Hijras also suffer exploitation and violence in prostitution. Because of unsafe sex, they carry STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) and HIV infections. They are considered as vectors of AIDS. Often they approach poorly qualified doctors for sex reassignment surgery due to poverty which causes infections and post surgery complications.

Due to social insecurity, unemployment and poverty, they are also involved in unlawful activities. Most banks are also reluctant to give loans to Transgender/Hijras as they do not have assets or a regular source of income. Social welfare departments issued welfare schemes but not specifically for Transgender/Hijras. There are schemes for Transgender/Hijras by the government, but such services have not been accessed by them. Economical empowerment means increasing one's opportunity to approach the economic resources, financial freedom and monetary autonomy. Most of the researches on the empowerment focus on gender issues relating to males and females, but there is a dearth of studies on the empowerment of the third gender.

II. OBJECTIVE

To study the role of Education in the Economic Empowerment of the Transgender/Hijras.

III. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

This qualitative exploratory research is conducted to study the role of education in the economic empowerment of TG/Hijras in Lucknow. A semi-structure interview schedule with open-ended questions and participant observation were used as tools of data collection. Narratives have been used to illustrate and analyse the similarities, dissimilarities, group patterns and relationships as a whole of this most disempowered community.

3.1 Population and Sample

The universe of this study is, the total population of Transgender/Hijras in Lucknow. The sample size of the study is 38 Transgender/Hijra which has been selected from Lucknow by using purposive sampling technique, as the population of Transgender/Hijra is latent, secluded and very limited in number.

- In- Depth Interview - Thirty eight Transgender/Hijras
- Case Study - Five Transgender/Hijras
- Focus Group Discussions - Nine Transgender/Hijras were contacted for each Focus Group Discussions

A pilot study was conducted on ten Transgender/Hijra participants from Lucknow in U.P.

IV. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The researcher used the data obtained from in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to enquire qualitatively about the role of education on the empowerment of Transgender/Hijras. In the present study, the FGD-1 of illiterate TG/Hijras and FGD-2 of literate TG/Hijras were conducted at their communes in Lucknow.

Table 4.1 Education of Transgender/Hijra in Lucknow

S.No.	Education	Number	Percentage
1	Illiterate	15	39.4%
2	Illiterate- could read and write only	4	10.5%
3	Primary Education	6	15.7%
4	Middle School Education	5	13.1%
5	High school	3	7.8%
6	Intermediate	3	7.8%
7	Graduation	2	5.7%
	Total	38	100%

Table 4.1 shows a maximum 39.4% of TG/Hijras are illiterate, 10.5% of TG/Hijras are illiterate who, though they did not get formal education, are able to read and write, 15.7% of TG/Hijras who attended primary school and 13.1% who attended middle school. 7.8% who attended High school and 7.8% who had Intermediate and 5.2% with Graduation qualifications are found in the present study.

Table 4.2 Occupation of Transgender/Hijras in Lucknow

S.No.	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1	Badhai	17	44.7 %
2	Begging	5	13.5 %
3	Prostitution	9	23.6 %
4	Social Work	3	7.8 %
5	Others	2	5.2 %
6	Unemployed	2	5.2 %
	Total	38	100

Table 4.2 shows the main occupation of TG/Hijras as badhai at 44.7% and prostitution at 23.6%. TG/Hijras involved in begging were 13.1%, in social work were 7.8% and other occupation was 5.2%. 5.2% TG/Hijras are unemployed out of total TG/Hijra.

Table 4.3 Income of Transgender/Hijras in Lucknow

S.No	Income Per month (in Rupees)	Number	Percentage
1	Below 5,000	13	34.2
2	5,001- 10,000	6	15.7
3	10,001- 15,000	9	23.6
4	15,001-20,000	3	7.8
5	20,001 – 25,000	3	7.8
6	Above 25,000	2	5.7
7	Not applicable	2	5.2
	Total	38	100

Table 4.3 shows that the monthly income of a majority (34.2%) of TG/Hijras is below Rs. 5,000. 15.7% of TG/Hijras earned between Rs. 5,001- Rs.10,000. 23.6% of TG/Hijras earned Rs.10,001- Rs.15,000. 7.8% of TG/Hijras earned Rs.15,001- Rs. 20,000. 7.8% of TG/Hijras earned Rs.20,001 - Rs.25,000 per month. 5.2% of TG/Hijras earned more than Rs.25,000 per month. 5.2% of TG/Hijras earned nothing.

Table 4.4 Indicators of Economic Empowerment of Transgender /Hijras

S.No.	Economic empowerment	Illiterate	Literate
1	Economic status	Very low	Low
2	Employment opportunity	00.0%	44.4%
3	Freedom to spend and invest	33.3%	77.7%
4	Having bank accounts	22.2%	66.6%
5	Having autonomy of their bank accounts	11.1%	55.5%
6	Raising their voice against inequity and injustice	11.1%	44.4%

The table 4.4 shows that the illiterate TG/Hijras have very low economic status while literate TG/Hijras have low economic status. Illiterate TG/Hijras have no employment opportunities whereas the literate TG/Hijras have 44.4% of employment opportunities. 33.3% of illiterate TG/Hijras and 77.7% of literate TG/Hijras have freedom to spend and invest their money. 22.2% of illiterate TG/Hijras have bank accounts and only 11.1% have autonomy. 66.6% of the literate TG/Hijras have their bank accounts and 55.5% have autonomy. 11.1% of illiterate TG/Hijras and 44.4% of literate TG/Hijras have raised their voice against inequity and injustice. It will be seen that those who are more literate are economically independent and have freedom to spend and invest their money. Some of them financially support their biological family. In the present study, the literate TG/Hijras show economic empowerment on a small scale but decidedly more than illiterate TG/Hijras. A majority of literate TG/Hijras have their bank accounts and also have control over them while very few of the illiterate TG/Hijras have their bank accounts and control over them.

V. RESULTS

In the present study after conducting data analysis and interpretation, the following are the findings –

- In the present study, a majority 42.3% of TG/Hijras are of age group of 24- 33 years.
- A majority 63.2% of the TG/Hijras are Muslims followed by Hindus at 36.8%.
- A majority 63.2% of TG/Hijras have Guru's family (hijra jamaat) and 36.8% of TG/Hijra have biological family.
- 57.8% of TG/Hijras are living with their community members.
- 50.1% of TG/Hijras had got formal education while 49.9 % are illiterate TG/Hijras.
- Their main profession is badhai i.e.44.7% followed by prostitution i.e. 23.6%.
- A majority 34.2% of TG/Hijras have a monthly income below Rs.5000.
- About 20% of literate Transgender/Hijras have knowledge of alternative ways for accessibility to education i.e. National Institute of Open Schooling, Distance Education, or Adult Education.
- A majority of illiterate Transgender/Hijras have no scope for employment, hence they have a very low economic status. Even the skilled illiterate Transgender/Hijras have not got employment.
- A majority of literate Transgender/Hijras also have a limited scope for employment because of low level of education and their gender identity. They are subjected to biasness and violence at work place, which leads to discontinuation of jobs.

- Very few of the illiterate TG/Hijras have bank accounts with little autonomy, while most of the literate TG/Hijras have their bank accounts with proper autonomy over them. A majority of TG/hijras are deprived of their parental property and other inherited emoluments, and a very negligible number of them have a parental house. The responses show that some of the literate TG/Hijras have increased their income generation resources while illiterate TG/Hijras have no opportunities.
- A majority of the TG/Hijras aspire to be self employed or to involve in business, to give up begging, give up prostitution and obtain government jobs.
- A majority of literate TG/Hijras and a few of the illiterate TG/Hijras show the desire of working for the welfare of their community members. Some of literate TG/Hijras voiced their wish to study further which is very hopeful fact.
- It is found that a majority of literate TG/Hijras are ready to study, and actively motivated and helped their community members in accessing education.
- The majority of literate TG/Hijras have found an improved lifestyle unlike illiterate TG/Hijras.
- It is observed that illiterate TG/Hijras have no scope of employment due to illiteracy.
- It is also observed that in the present study, that literate TG/Hijras have the freedom to spend and invest their earnings, while illiterate TG/Hijras have not achieved such freedom.
- Most of the literate Transgender/Hijras have raised their voice against inequity in wages, biasness and unprotected sex, but hardly any of the illiterate Transgender/Hijras can raise their voice. Literate Transgender/Hijras are more economically empowered than illiterate Transgender/Hijras.
- It is found that literate TG/Hijras have a little more economic empowerment than illiterate TG/Hijras.
- It is found that the main expectation that both literate and illiterate TG/Hijras have from society is of social acceptance.
- It is found that those TG/Hijras who have support of family become more confident, positive and successful.
- It is found in the study that the older TG/Hijra show a deplorable condition of living and also reveal bigotry, abusive and hostile atmosphere within their community.
- It is found that literate TG/Hijras have slightly more economic empowerment than illiterate TG/Hijras.

V. CONCLUSION

Not only are Transgender/Hijras are facing stigma and discrimination themselves, but their families are also stigmatized due to their Transgender/Hijra children. Their educational empowerment is mainly responsible for other empowerments i.e. social empowerment, economic empowerment and political empowerment. It can be concluded from the data analysis and interpretation that literate Transgender/Hijras are economically more empowered than illiterate Transgender/Hijras. They have more employment opportunities, autonomy in their financial matters, banking operations and own assets than illiterate Transgender/Hijras. Thus education plays a very significant role to economically empower the Transgender/Hijras community. The present study helped Transgender/Hijras to the extent that it made them aware about their right to education. There is a need to implement the government's welfare policies at the grass root level to increase the education level, which in turn will enhance the employment opportunities and economic empowerment of third gender people. Our society should make efforts to utilize their talents and treat them with dignity.

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