

Issues and Challenges Faced by Transgender LGBTQ+ Community in India: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

Heterosexuality should no longer be assumed as the default; this assumption is known as heterosexism. While many societies have made considerable progress in advocating for human rights, LGBT rights continue to face challenges in gaining widespread acceptance. Notably, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drafted in 1948, does not specifically address sexual orientation, making the recognition of LGBT rights a matter of debate. However, the Declaration does assert that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms outlined, without any form of distinction. One of the significant challenges faced by transgender individuals is a lack of social acceptance. Despite being part of every culture throughout recorded history, they have only recently gained attention in psychological, medical, and social research. Unchecked negative attitudes towards transgender people can lead to transphobia and discriminatory treatment. As transgender visibility increases, it is essential to support their integration into mainstream society. To achieve this, understanding the psychological issues and challenges they face, as well as examining societal attitudes, is crucial. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of social identity development and contemporary issues within the LGBTQ community, emphasizing its significance in shaping modern perspectives on one of the most marginalized groups. The research encourages youth to engage with the challenges faced by the LGBTQ community, with a primary focus on the issues and challenges encountered by the community in India, along with the rights and welfare schemes available to them in the country.

Keywords: *LGBTQ+ community, India, LGBTQ rights, social status, welfare schemes.*

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Introduction

LGBT is an acronym representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. According to Gender Wiki, the acronym LGBT is used to highlight a diversity of sexualities and gender identities and sometimes encompasses all non-heterosexual or non-cisgender individuals, rather than being exclusive to those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.² A popular variant, LGBTQ, includes the letter Q for those who identify as queer and/or are questioning their sexual identity, with this term being in use since 1996.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals are more likely to face intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and violence due to their sexual orientation compared to heterosexual individuals. This is largely attributed to homophobia, which is the fear or hatred of homosexuality. Several factors, including moral, religious, and political beliefs of dominant groups, contribute to the reinforcement of homophobia on a larger scale. In some countries, homosexuality is criminalized and can result in fines, imprisonment, life sentences, or even the death penalty. Human sexuality is experienced in a variety of ways, with some individuals identifying as transgender, transsexual, or intersex, further challenging traditional gender categories. As more individuals openly express their sexual orientations, they are also organizing and advocating for their rights. Thanks to the efforts of these groups and their allies, acceptance of LGBT rights is growing worldwide. In response, some governments are beginning to pass laws supporting LGBT rights and enacting anti-discrimination laws.³ Looking ahead, the primary global challenges for LGBT rights will include eradicating persecution based on sexual orientation, ensuring legal protection against hate crimes and propaganda, advocating for equal rights and privileges (such as marriage, adoption, medical decision-making, and inheritance), and combating homophobia and heterosexism through education and awareness efforts.

Research Objectives

- To study the problem faced by Transgender (LGBTQ+) community in India;
- To study the available LGBTQ rights, policies and welfare schemes in India;
and
- To provide suggestions to improve their social status in India.

²https://gender.fandom.com/wiki/Gender_Wiki

³UN Free & Equal: <https://www.unfe.org>

Review of Literature

Anuradha Parasar (2007) in “Homosexuality in India – The Invisible Conflict” discusses homosexual marriages in India as a concealed issue, examining their evolution, societal attitudes, and the outcomes of legalizing homosexual relationships in other countries.⁴ She concludes, based on empirical and theoretical evidence, on the possibility of legalizing such marriages in India. Chatterjee Subhrajit (2014) in “Problems Faced by LGBT People in the Mainstream Society: Some Recommendations” states that LGBTQ individuals face similar prejudices due to societal beliefs about sexuality and gender, leading to socioeconomic injustice, discrimination, and violence, more so than heterosexual individuals.⁵ Rachel Kathleen O’Prey (2012) in “A Study on Attitudes Toward LGBTQ Youth” explores how religious commitment, training, and race affect homophobic and transphobic attitudes, highlighting the need for more effective training to improve social worker perceptions and advocacy for LGBTQ youth in care.⁶

Naz Foundation vs Government Of Nct Of Delhi And Others ... Indian Kanoon [https://indiankanoon.org › docAmber](https://indiankanoon.org/docAmber) Tanweer (2018) in “LGBT Rights in India” discusses the concept and nature of LGBT individuals, highlighting discrimination based on sex that violates their fundamental and human rights. The paper focuses on legal definitions, existing gaps, challenges faced by the LGBT minority in India, and the removal of social stigmas to ensure equal rights for all.⁷ Dr. B. Golden Kisha (2015) in “A Study of Attitude of Society Towards Transgender in South India” compares the attitudes of youth and adults towards transgender individuals. The study reveals that adult women (not college students) exhibit more positive attitudes, with religion not playing a significant role in shaping these views.⁸

⁴ResearchGate

[https://www.researchgate.net › publication › 36179297...](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/36179297...) (PDF) Homosexuality In India - The Invisible Conflict:

⁵Search Labs | AI Overview

⁶Search Labs | AI Overview; also

Naz Foundation vs Government Of Nct Of Delhi And Others ... Indian Kanoon [https://indiankanoon.org › doc](https://indiankanoon.org/doc)

⁷Centre for Law & Policy Research [https://clpr.org.in › uploads › 2019/06 › Section-...](https://clpr.org.in/uploads/2019/06/Section-...)

⁸LGBT Rights in India: The Status Quo, International Journal of Law Management & Humanities [https://www.ijlmh.com › wp-content › uploads](https://www.ijlmh.com/wp-content/uploads)

Research Methodology

The current research is exploratory in nature and the focus is to study the issues and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ community in India, the rights and welfare schemes in India to help the LGBTQ+ Community. The study is carried out completely based on secondary data as there is almost no opportunity to gather primary data. The study is also conducted in geographical limitations, considering only India because of limitation of financial support, legal and social issues.

Major Challenges Faced by LGBT Community

History of Legal Battles of LGBT Community and Campaign Against Sec 377

After decades of legal challenges to Section 377, the Naz Foundation filed a petition in 2001 with the Delhi High Court, questioning the law's constitutional validity. The petition was rejected by the Delhi High Court in 2004 based on local standings. In 2006, they appealed the decision to the Supreme Court of India, which ruled in their favor and upheld their petition. In 2009, a landmark verdict in the case of Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of New Delhi and Others led the Delhi High Court to read down Section 377, declaring it unconstitutional. This ruling marked a significant moment in Indian history, offering a glimmer of hope for the LGBT community during a dark time. However, this victory was short-lived, as the Supreme Court overturned the Delhi High Court's judgment in 2013.⁹

In 2013, the Supreme Court overruled the Delhi High Court judgment in Souresh Koushal vs. Union of India. The Supreme Court held that Section 377 could not be read down and it was for Parliament to decide on decriminalization of homosexuality. Despite the Supreme Court judgment, the movement against the Sec 377 expanded on a large scale. In April 2014 a bench of two judges of the Supreme Court of India passed a verdict in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India ("NALSA") and held that the rights to life, dignity and autonomy would include the right to one's gender identity and sexual orientation and they have a right to express their chosen gender identity. The NALSA verdict gave a new hope to rekindle the battle against sec 377.¹⁰ Subsequently, in 2017, a landmark verdict was given by the Supreme

⁹Search Labs | AI Overview

¹⁰Search Labs | AI Overview;

Problems Faced by LGBT People in the Mainstream Society;

International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS) <https://www.ijims.com/uploads>

Court in the case of Puttaswamy V. Union of India, the Supreme Court held that the right to privacy cannot be refused “even if a minute fraction of the population is affected”. The Court declared that the right to privacy distinctively incorporates the right to have intimate relations of one’s choice and includes the right to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Impact of Exclusion and Discrimination

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals face significant challenges growing up in a society where heterosexuality is often considered the only acceptable orientation, and homosexuality is viewed as deviant. They continue to experience discrimination and exclusion worldwide in various aspects of life. Homophobic violence and abuse against LGBT people are prevalent. Same-sex couples lack the same rights and protections as opposite-sex couples, leading to discrimination in areas like healthcare, pensions, and social protection schemes. In the workplace, many LGBT individuals conceal their sexual orientation or endure harassment for fear of losing their jobs.

Young LGBT individuals are particularly vulnerable, facing alienation from family and friends, harassment at school, and invisibility, which can result in academic underachievement, school dropout, mental health issues, and homelessness. This discrimination not only limits their access to essential social services like employment, healthcare, education, and housing but also marginalizes them within society, making them one of the most vulnerable groups.

Here are some major problems faced by LGBT in India.¹¹

Marginalization and Social Exclusion

Marginalized individuals often have little control over their lives or available resources, and they may become stigmatized due to negative public attitudes. Their opportunities for social contribution can be limited, leading to low self-confidence, poor self-esteem, and isolation. LGBT individuals often experience multiple forms of marginalization, such as racism, sexism, poverty, and homophobia or transphobia, all of which can negatively affect mental health. Marginalization and bias related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression frequently prevent LGBT people

¹¹Search Labs | AI Overview; ous health and mental health problems.; Helping Families Support Their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and ...

from accessing essential public services like healthcare and housing, contributing to significant health disparities. The exclusion and discrimination faced by LGBT individuals have profound effects on their lives, leading to outcomes such as early school dropout, leaving home and family, difficulty finding regular jobs, and fewer opportunities compared to others.¹²

Impact of Family Reactions on LGBT Children

Many lesbians, gay men, and bisexual individuals (LGB) delayed discussing their identity until adulthood, fearing rejection and negative reactions. Prior to the 1990s, LGBT youth had limited resources to explore their identity or find support. However, the rise of the internet, school diversity clubs, and LGBT youth groups has provided gay and transgender youth with access to accurate information, guidance, and support. With these resources, more LGBT youth are coming out during adolescence. Until recently, there was little understanding of how families react when an LGBT young person comes out during adolescence.

Families and caregivers play a crucial role in the well-being and risk factors of their LGBT children. Poor communication and misunderstandings between parents and LGBT children often lead to increased family conflict. This lack of understanding regarding sexual orientation and gender identity can escalate into fighting and family disruption, sometimes resulting in LGBT adolescents being removed from or forced out of their homes. As a consequence, many LGBT youth are placed in foster care, end up in juvenile detention, or find themselves on the streets due to family conflict linked to their LGBT identity.

Problems of Homophobia

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, than those who identify themselves as heterosexual. This is due to homophobia. Some of the factors that may reinforce homophobia on a larger scale are moral, religious, and political beliefs of a dominant group. Living in a homophobic environment, forces many LGBT people to conceal their sexuality, for fear of the negative reactions and consequences of coming out. Homophobia manifests itself in

¹²Generative AI is experimental;
Harassment disparities and risk profile within lesbian, gay ... National Institutes of Health (NIH) (.gov) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9797955>

different forms, for example homophobic jokes, physical attacks, discrimination in the workplace and negative media representation. LGBT people who make the decision to declare their sexual orientation can face prejudice and discrimination from their family, friends, and also from wider society.

Harassment of LGBT Students in Schools

LGBT students face harassment in schools. Being a teenager is tough enough without fearing harassment in a place where you are supposed to feel safe. All over the country lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students get harassed every day at school. Students who may be even just perceived as being LGBT also get harassed.¹³

Drug Addiction of LGBT people

LGBT people are more likely to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs than the general population, are less likely to abstain, report higher rates of substance abuse problems, and are more likely to continue heavy drinking into later life. LGBT individuals use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs for similar reasons as others, but their likelihood of doing so is increased by personal and cultural stresses linked to their sexual orientation or gender identity. These stresses are often compounded by the challenges of deciding which aspects of their identity to disclose, and to whom, such as at work, with friends, family, neighbours, in medical settings, or in social activities.

Problems of Criminalization

In some countries, homosexuality is illegal and punishable by fines, imprisonment, life sentences, and even the death penalty. In India, the advancement of gay rights took a significant setback when, in December 2011, the Supreme Court overturned a 2009 ruling by a lower court that had decriminalized gay sex, thus reclassifying homosexuality as an offense. Section 377 of India's Penal Code, a law dating back to the 19th century, prohibits sex "against the order of nature."¹⁴

¹³Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Section_377

¹⁴Views and Experiences of LGBTQ+ People in Prison ... National Institutes of Health (NIH) (.gov)
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8430972>

Legal Injustice

LGBT communities face significant issues related to legal injustice. Certain groups within the LGBT community are disproportionately affected by violence and discrimination, often at the hands of law enforcement. In recent years, there have been numerous documented cases of police brutality targeting LGBT individuals. People of color, transgender individuals, and LGBT homeless youth are particularly vulnerable, facing higher rates of non-violent drug arrests compared to their white, heterosexual counterparts. They are also more likely to face drug possession charges and receive harsher sentences. Once incarcerated, LGBT individuals often endure further harassment in an already brutal prison system. Additionally, many LGBT individuals lack legal protections against abusive and discriminatory actions, as oppressive laws and ordinances deny them the same basic rights and privileges as non-LGBT individuals.¹⁵

Problems of Terminology

Problems in language occur when terminology is unclear or when terminology has been associated with negative stereotypes. Problems occur in language concerning lesbians, gay men, and bisexual persons when the language is too vague or the concepts are poorly defined. Language may be ambiguous in reference, so that the reader is uncertain about its meaning or its inclusion and exclusion criteria; and the term homosexuality has been associated in the past with deviance, mental illness, and criminal behaviour, and these negative stereotypes may be perpetuated by biased language. In India this community is being called 'chakka' as if their lives have no value from a very young age, perhaps due to their upbringing, they are made to differentiate between male and female genders.

Discrimination at Workplace

Discrimination against LGBT individuals in the workplace significantly contributes to the socioeconomic disparities they face. Gay and transgender people often experience socioeconomic inequalities due to workplace discrimination, which directly impacts their job stability, leading to higher rates of unemployment and poverty.

¹⁵Why do some people calls transgenders 'sixer' or 'chhakka ...Quora,<https://www.quora.com/Why-do-some-people-calls-tr...>

Government Efforts for Transgender Persons

The *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019* defines a transgender person as one whose gender identity does not align with the gender assigned at birth. It includes transgender men and women, individuals with intersex variations, gender-queers, and those with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra. The Bill allows transgender individuals to apply to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity that recognizes their gender as “transgender.”

The Bill also proposes the creation of a National Council for Transgender Persons (NCT) and prohibits discrimination against transgender individuals in areas such as education, employment, healthcare, movement, residence, rental housing, access to public or private offices, and government or private establishments. The Act further ensures the right of transgender persons to reside with their parents and immediate family members. Offenses committed against transgender persons are punishable by imprisonment of 6 months to 2 years, along with a fine.¹⁶

‘Transgender Community Desk’ at Gachibowli Police Station

This is the first-of-its-kind gender-inclusive community policing initiative in the country, the Cyberabad police inaugurated a ‘Transgender Community Desk’ at Gachibowli Police Station. The desk will be managed by a police liaison officer and a transgender person who is designated as a community coordinator. It will be the focal point for all grievance redressed among the transgender community in the Cyberabad Commissionerate. The desk will provide support to file cases in offences related to violence or discrimination against any transgender person. Among other services, the desk will also provide counselling, legal aid, life skills, soft skills training, job placements, and referral linkages to welfare schemes in partnership with the Department of Women and Child Welfare, and the District Legal Services Authority. The Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC) will also organise monthly training, employability, life-skill training, and facilitate access to job opportunities, while Prajwala, a non-governmental organisation, would assist the desk to facilitate a safe space for any transgender person who needs emergency transit stay.¹⁷

¹⁶transgender persons (protection of rights) act, 2019 (india)

South Asian Translaw Database <https://translaw.clpr.org.in> › Legislations

¹⁷India’s first ‘Transgender Community Desk’ opens ... - The Hindu The Hindu
<https://www.thehindu.com> › News › Cit

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020

The Central Government made the rules under the powers conferred by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.¹⁸ The Act came into effect on 10th January 2020, which is the first concrete step towards ensuring the welfare of transgender persons. The rules seek to recognise the identity of transgender and prohibit discrimination in the fields of education, employment, healthcare, holding or disposing of property, holding public or private office and access to and use of public services and benefits. It prohibits the discrimination of transgender persons at educational establishments, in employment or occupational opportunities, healthcare services.

National Council for Transgender Persons

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment constituted the National Council for Transgender Persons in August 2020. This council was established to advise the government on policies, programmes, legislation, and projects concerning transgender persons.

National Portal for Transgender Persons

Launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in November 2020, the National Portal for Transgender Persons enables applicants to obtain a Certificate of Identity and Identity Card without physical interaction with the issuing office. Individuals who receive the certificate are entitled to change their first name on their birth certificate and all other official documents related to their identity.

Allowance for Transgender Persons

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, as the nodal ministry for transgender welfare, decided to provide a subsistence allowance of Rs. 1500 to each transgender person to support their basic needs. This financial assistance aims to help the transgender community meet their day-to-day requirements. NGOs and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) working for transgender persons have been tasked with raising awareness about this initiative.

¹⁸Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 High Court of Tripura
<https://thc.nic.in> > Central Governmental Rules

SMILE - Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise

The SMILE scheme focuses on the rehabilitation and welfare of transgender persons, including provisions for medical care, counselling, education, skill development, and economic support. The Comprehensive Rehabilitation for the Welfare of Transgender Persons is a sub-scheme under the SMILE initiative, which emphasizes rehabilitation, medical facilities, intervention, counselling, education, skill development, and economic linkages for transgender individuals.¹⁹

PM-DAKSH

PM-DAKSH is a skill development scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice. PM-DAKSH provides skill development training to transgender beneficiaries. It provides short term training programme, up-skilling/re-skilling, entrepreneurship development programme, and long-term training programmes for transgender persons under the PM-DAKSH scheme.²⁰

Garima Greh: Shelter Home for Transgender Persons

Garima Greh- Shelter Home for Transgender Persons is a pilot scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to provide shelter to transgender persons. The main aim of *Garima Greh* shelter homes is to provide safe and secure shelter to transgender persons in need. These *Garima Greh* shelter homes are in the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. Ministry has provided full financial assistance to community based organizations (CBOs) for setting up these *Garima Greh* shelter homes. *Garima Greh* shelter homes provide basic amenities like food, shelter, medical care, recreational facilities to transgender persons. *Garima Greh* shelter homes also conduct capacity building and skill development programmes for transgender persons.²¹

¹⁹National Council for Transgender Persons

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Council_for_...

²⁰National Portal For Transgender Persons : Ministry of Social ... National Portal For Transgender Persons <https://transgender.dosje.gov.in>

²¹Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment <https://socialjustice.gov.in> › UploadFile Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise

Recommendations

To address the numerous challenges faced by the LGBTQ community, India needs to implement several changes to reduce discrimination:

1. Inclusion of LGBTQ in School Curriculum: The stigma surrounding LGBTQ individuals largely stems from a lack of awareness and understanding. India should introduce LGBTQ education in schools to increase awareness and exposure among students, fostering acceptance and reducing ignorance.

2. Develop a Pro-LGBTQ Environment: One of the major challenges for the LGBTQ community is inclusion and isolation. Although progress has been made with open conversations, more platforms for the LGBTQ community to meet, share experiences, and support each other are needed. Providing a safe space for expression can help alleviate mental health issues, such as suicidal thoughts, and promote overall well-being.

3. Government Intervention and Programmes: The government should focus on creating programmes for the LGBTQ community, particularly transgender individuals, to help them secure employment and break free from cycles of poverty and discrimination. Special attention should be given to rural areas, including workshops and awareness campaigns to combat honour killings and corrective therapies imposed by families.

4. Construction of Shelters: Building shelters in rural areas for the LGBTQ community could provide a safe space to regroup and prevent homelessness.

5. Free Counselling Sessions: Addressing the psychological stress faced by many LGBTQ individuals is essential. The government should offer free counselling and therapy services to support mental health.

6. Police Sensitization: Police forces at all levels should be sensitized to LGBT issues and fundamental human rights principles to ensure fair and respectful treatment.

7. Eliminate Stigmatizing Language: Language that stigmatizes LGBTQ individuals, such as terms like “sexual deviate” or “sexual invert,” should be avoided to foster a more inclusive society.

8. Education on Acceptance: Local authorities, policymakers, schools, and families need to be better educated on accepting gender-diverse children and treating individuals of varying sexual orientations and gender identities with equality, while applying policies and programmes in a friendly, non-hostile manner.

Conclusion

LGBT individuals, who often have different sexual orientations, face widespread discrimination and exclusion, making it difficult to meet their basic needs. This exclusion can manifest in various ways, from personal relationships to societal ignorance and violations of fundamental rights. Historically, LGBT people have been involved in the fight for racial and economic justice, and today, many LGBTQ activists draw connections between LGBT rights and broader social justice movements. Ultimately, protecting LGBT individuals from violence and discrimination does not require creating new specific rights or human rights standards. All individuals, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, are entitled to the protections guaranteed by international human rights law, including the rights to life, security, privacy, freedom from torture, arbitrary detention, discrimination, and the right to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

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