



The Social Life of Transgenders and the Role of Social Work Interventions: A Comprehensive Review

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16946298>

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Abstract

Transgender people face considerable social fluidity and discrimination, with many experiencing marginalization and exclusion from significant aspects of life. Through a review of the literature, this paper explores the social life of transgender people and the implications for social work intervention. It includes data supported the serious disparities transgender people face in education, employment, health care, and social integration. Finally, the paper also highlights effective social work practices that work with and alongside the inclusion and support of the transgender community.

Keywords: Transgender, Social Work, Marginalization, Inclusion, Social Integration

Introduction

The social lives of transgenders is shaped by an intertwined set of cultural, legal and socio-economic factors. Even with increasing recognition and legal progress in numerous nations, transgender people suffer stigma and discrimination (Budge, Tebbe, & Howard, 2013) [2]. Gender roles in society tend to be rigid, and transgender individuals are often ostracized from their communities and not accepted, they are excluded from education, employment and social services; reinforcing their marginalisation. Transgender experience prejudices and stigma in multiple contexts, including healthcare, work environments, and legal systems.

Such discrimination against transgender people is not just social but also systematic. Because many public and private institutions refuse to recognize the gender identity of trans people, they are excluded on the basis of their identity. Schools, workplaces and health care institutions frequently follow a gender-binary model that does not include transgender people. This systematic exclusion generates and further entrenches economic and social inequalities within the transgender community.

The political climate of transgender people is not same country by country. For instance, In nineteen hundred, different types of transgender identities were recognized and

accepted in some cultures, while they are a taboo in others.) In South Asia, hijras (a transgender community) have been part of the culture for centuries, yet they continue to be marginalized today. In contrast, while some legal progress has been made in Western societies, social acceptance has not kept pace. Cultural, legal and economic factors intersect in ways that shape the social life of trans people (James *et al.*, 2016) [1].

Another key aspect of transgender social life is mental health. Research has shown that higher chronic stress endured through discrimination and social exclusion has led to an increased risk of mental health issues among transgender individuals. Transgender people have disproportionately high rates of anxiety and depression and higher thoughts of suicide than people who aren't supervised by society. These mental health challenges are exacerbated by an absence of family and social supports. Gender-affirming therapy and psychological support are essential for enhancing the well-being of transgender individuals, but these services often remain out of reach owing to financial factors and cultural biases (Budge *et al.*, 2013) [2].

Social work plays a vital part in tackling these issues. Transgender people often face discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization, which can have a

detrimental impact on their mental health and well-being. By implementing policy changes, community programs and awareness campaigns, social workers can work towards creating a more inclusive society where trans people can live a dignified life. This article identifies the different aspects of transgender social life and assesses the impact of social work practice in overcoming those barriers experienced by the transgender community.

Review of Literature: Grant *et al.* (2011) ^[6], relative unemployment of transgender individuals, compared to the rest of the economy, as well as workplace discrimination. Studies show that prejudice and stigma from society whittle the net avenues for employers to hire transgender people (Badgett *et al.*, 2013) ^[1]. On top of this, workplace harassment leads to job instability and financial insecurity. Social work-based interventions like career counselling and workplace diversity training have proven effective in addressing their workplace discrimination while increasing employment in the transgender population.

Mental health and Psychological Well-being Transgender individuals have an increased prevalence of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Hendricks & Testa, 2012) ^[8]. With chronic forms of discrimination and marginalization contributing to such disparities in mental health, as Meyers (2003) ^[13] minority stress model posits. Psychosocial interventions such as affirmative therapy and peer-support groups have been demonstrated to positively influence psychological health to transgender individuals.

Healthcare Access and Discrimination Transgender people encounter various barriers to access, including discrimination and lack of knowledgeable providers. Many health care providers simply do not have training on transgender health care, leading to inadequate or inappropriate care. Social work interventions, like advocating for inclusive healthcare policies and providing training for medical professionals, are essential in promoting access to care and mitigating disparities.

Kosciw *et al.* (2022) ^[5] demonstrated the prevalence of bullying within educational institutions compared to that of their cisgender peers that also resulted in a higher dropout rate. When there are no inclusive policies in schools, transgender students have greater educational barriers. Social work interventions in educational environments, such as implementing anti-bullying programs and gender-neutral policies, have proven effective in reducing harassment and discrimination against transgender students and fostering safe classroom environments (Russell *et al.*, 2010) ^[9].

The legal recognition granted to transgender identities varies considerably across countries, impacting both social cohesion and access to rights (Winter *et al.* 2018) ^[7]. Studies have found that legal protections from discrimination greatly improve the well-being of transgender individuals. Social workers are essential advocates for legal reform and can also support people who, like transgender individuals, must navigate bureaucracies in order to obtain identity papers that are consistent with their gender identity (Davy *et al.*, 2017) ^[4].

Table 1: Political Representation of Transgender Individuals Globally

Country	Notable Transgender Political Figures	Year Elected/Appointed
India	Shabnam Mausi (Member of Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly)	1998
	Madhu Kinnar (Mayor of Raigarh, Chhattisgarh)	2015
United States	Sarah McBride (Delaware State Senate)	2020
Germany	Tessa Ganserer (Member of Bundestag)	2021
	Nyke Slawik (Member of Bundestag)	2021
Philippines	Geraldine Roman (Member of House of Representatives)	2016
Thailand	Tanwarin Sukkhapsit (Member of House of Representatives)	2019

Sources: Wikipedia

Table 2: Legal Recognition and Rights of Transgender Individuals by Country

Country	Legal Gender Recognition	Anti-Discrimination Protections
Argentina	Gender Identity Law, 2012	Yes
India	Transgender Persons Act, 2019	Yes
Germany	Yes Transsexuals Act, 1980	Yes
United States	Varies by state	Varies by state
Japan	Gender Identity Disorder Act, 2003 ^[13]	No

Objectives of the Paper

- To analyze the social challenges faced by transgender individuals based on existing literature.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of social work interventions in improving the lives of transgender individuals.
- To identify gaps in social policies and suggest measures for better inclusion.

Methodology Adopted for the Paper: This study employs a qualitative review-based methodology, analyzing secondary data from peer-reviewed journals, reports, and government documents. A thematic analysis approach is used to categorize the findings into key areas such as employment, education, healthcare, and legal rights. Additionally, statistical data from surveys and reports are incorporated to provide empirical support for the discussion.

Table 3: Prevalence of Transgender Individuals by Country

Country	Percentage of Population (%)	Source
Germany	3.0	World Population Review
Sweden	3.0	World Population Review
United States	0.6	Healthline
Canada	0.33	Statistics Canada
India	0.04	Census of India, 2011 ^[3]

The World Population review shows the prevalence of 0.6 percent in the USA compared to 3.0 percent in Germany and Sweden, Canada reports a prevalence of 0.33 percent and India the lowest prevalence of 0.04 percent (Census of India, 2011)^[3]; it is noted that this variation is determined by social recognition and the establishment of legal and administrative frameworks, which determine self-identification and prevalence in data collection.

Table 4: Literacy Rates Among Transgender Individuals in India

State/Union Territory	Literacy Rate (%)
Kerala	84.10
Bihar	55.00
Maharashtra	67.50
Uttar Pradesh	55.00
All India Average	56.07

Source: Census of India, 2011^[3].

The literacy rates of transgender persons in India, highlighted from Census of India (2011)^[3], reveal regional variations where Kerala has the highest literacy rate of 84.10% and is far above from the national average of 56.07% and states report lowest literacy rates like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh report literacy rates of 55.00% of almost equal to national mean, whereas Maharashtra accounted moderately higher literacy rate with values of 67.50%, which shows that socio-economic development, educational access i.e., Divyang schemes, Policies of region and inclusiveness in frontline transgenders plays significant role in educational achievement of transgender persons.

Table 5: Employment Status of Transgender Individuals in India

Employment Sector	Percentage (%)
Formal Employment	6
Sex Work	5
Domestic Labor	5

Source: UNAIDS

In India, the employment distribution data of transgender individuals reported by UNAIDS show a drastic under-representation of formal economic inclusion, with only 6% in formal employment, 5% in sex work and 5% in domestic work.

Table 6: Social Support Perception Among Transgender Individuals Globally

Country	Social support for transgender
Argentina	78
Canada	78
Great Britain	75
United States	71
Japan	43

Source: IPSOS 2022^[10].

A cross-country analysis of an IPSOS survey found that, the perception of social support for transgender people varies greatly: Argentina (78 percent), Canada (78 percent), Great Britain (75 percent) and the United States (71 percent) is a good example of societies that see increased social support for transgender people among their citizens, while Japan (43 percent) is far behind; countries such as these reflect a broader trend among Western countries desensitizing to the issues at hand concerning the rights of transgender people and encouraging acceptance of these individuals, while some countries in Asia still deal with socio-cultural barriers well-positioned against transgender rights inclusion and inclusion, costly to social progress and development directed by laws and policies.

Table 7: Public support for transgender rights in selected countries

Country	Support for Transgender Rights (%)
Spain	87
Sweden	84
Argentina	82
United States	60
Russia	44

Source: Public Support for Transgender Rights: A 23 Country Survey

Public support for transgender rights differs widely between nations: Strong percentages of people in Spain (87%), Sweden (84%), and Argentina (82%) support transgender rights; in those countries, inclusive legislation, policies, and advocacy efforts are drawing social acceptance, whereas in the United States (60%) which remains divided over transgender rights due to sociopolitical debates regarding acceptance, support takes a backseat to the ongoing battle for integration; in Russia (44%), the negative effects of continuing conservative ideologies, regressive policies, and social stigma all compound to deprive transgender individuals of opportunities for acceptance and equality.

Table 8: Challenges Faced by Transgender Students in Higher Education in the United States

Challenge	Percentage (%)
Bullying, Harassment, or Assault	39
Unfair Treatment by Teachers or Staff	32
Poor Mental Health During Higher Education	55

Source: Educational Experiences of Transgender People - Williams Institute (2021)^[18].

The complementary approach towards the challenges faced by transgender students in higher education in the US based on data from the Williams Institute serves to underscore the serious systemic barriers facing such students, presenting further statistics indicating the extent to which just under a half mention that they have been bullied, harassed or assaulted, a third faced unfair treatment from a teacher or staff and an overwhelming 55% state that their mental health generally suffers throughout their time on the course, once again highlighting the pernicious effect of discrimination, institutional attitudes and psychological trauma that together are used to erode these students' educational experience and frames the need for both educational reforms and academic staff sensitisation programmes to be put in place.

Findings Derived from Literature and Statistical Data

- The data from Germany and Sweden somewhat seem to obtain higher proportion of transgender subjects compared to the global proportion (3.0%) whilst India reports the lowest (0.04%) that could be due to differences in culture, infrastructure, policy frameworks, methodological handling, and means of capturing them as per the nation and practice.
- The Indian transgender community is largely marginalized in terms of employment opportunities; just 6% of them have formal jobs, while 5% have to engage in sex work and 5% end up as domestic helpers, highlighting the need for more employment policies promoting workspaces designed for their inclusion and skill improvement.
- Higher Perception of Societal Acceptance in Western Nations: Most transgender people in Argentina (78%), Canada (78%), Great Britain (75%), and the United States (71%) think society is getting more tolerant, while Japan is only at 43%, likely due to regional differences in societal attitudes, legal protections, and advocacy effectiveness.
- While certain countries with more progressive attitudes toward LGBT rights enjoy higher levels of support Spain (87%), Sweden (84%), and Argentina (82%) compared to Russia (44%), the trend is indicative of the victory of national and provincial policies, media representation, and cultural attitudes over public opinion.
- Across the U.S., Transgender Students Overcome Major Educational Barriers: 39% of transgender students report bullying or harassment, 32% unfair treatment by teachers, and 55% poor mental health and tests the importance of anti-discrimination policies, mental health assistance, and comprehensive educational frameworks.
- Transgender Representation in Global Politics: While some individuals such as Shabnam Mausi in India, Sarah McBride in the United States, and Tessa Ganserer in Germany have achieved political representation, the global trend shows only limited representation of transgender individuals in political offices, with significant progress still needed in many regions.
- Countries like Argentina, India, and Germany offer legal gender recognition and anti-discrimination protections, in stark contrast to the United States, where legal recognition is patchwork across states and anti-discrimination protections are non-existent in places like Japan, showing the harrowing combination of legal recognition and rights that this document has outlined.
- Workplace Discrimination Curbs Economic Integration: At 6% formal employment, above all, the overrepresentation of transgender individuals in informal and stigmatized sectors (notably sex work and domestic labour) draws attention to the need for targeted employment policies, workplace inclusion programmes and legal safeguards against discrimination.
- Low mental health among U.S. transgender students (55% reported poor mental health) reflects their public

acceptance at home and abroad, suggesting that mental health support systems, affirmative social work and public awareness campaigns can benefit transgender people in many countries.

Recommendation and Social Work Intervention**Policy and Legal Reforms****Recommendations**

- Governments must adopt and guarantee comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that explicitly protect transgender persons in education, employment, health care, and public services.
- Transgender people should be able to obtain legal gender recognition in a way that avoids unnecessary bureaucracy or legal witnesses.
- Implement affirmative action policies with respect to employment and education to ensure that transgender people are more adequately represented within the formal workforce and with academia.
- Prohibit discriminatory policies in the workplace, in health care and in other public services, with consequences for organizations that infringe on transgender rights.
- Addressing Trans Rights in Governance through Increased Representation

Social Work Interventions

- Social workers must work toward policy change and social justice that guarantee access to transition for the transgender community at government and institutional levels.
- Organize a series of legal literacy sessions for transgender individuals regarding their rights and legal recourse.
- Work alongside human rights organisations to document and report instances of discrimination, which will allow for more robust legal protection advocacy.
- Provide legal aid services and helplines that are dedicated to serve transgender persons facing discrimination or violence

Educational Integration**Recommendations**

- Ensure that there are gender-inclusive curricula in schools and universities to help dispel acceptance and decrease stigma against transgender individuals.
- Expand scholarships and financial aid for transgender students to promote equitable access to higher education.
- Providing training to educators and staff on creating an inclusive and non-discriminatory learning environment.
- Developing transgender-friendly policies in schools like gender-neutral restrooms and gender-affirming counseling and protection against bullying.

Social Work Interventions

- Conduct educational awareness programs in schools to sensitize gender equality through exclusive education to eradicate discrimination.
- Teacher sensitization workshops on transgender students to be comfortable in the school premises.
- Encourage peer support groups within educational

establishments to promote safe spaces for transgender students.

- Promote vocational training for trans-specific jobs or vocational training programs for trans individuals that increase their marketability in terms of employment.

Anti-Discrimination Approaches

Recommendations

- Strengthen workplace anti-discrimination protections to ensure that being transgender does not affect hiring, promotions, or working conditions.
- Launch transgender specific vocation trainings to facilitate jobs in formal sectors.
- Support corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that offer job training and employment for transgender individuals.
- Promote entrepreneurship and self-employment through microfinance loans, grants, and mentorship programs for businesses.

Social Work Interventions

- Provide job-specific training through employment training centers for transgender individuals.
- Engage with companies to develop trans-affirming hiring practices.
- Develop self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperative businesses to foster sustainable livelihoods for transgender people.
- Counsel and guide transgender job seekers through their career system.

Health care and mental health assistance

Recommendations

- Health care for transgender people must be free or subsidized, including gender-affirming surgery, hormone therapies, and general health care.
- Include mental health services in transgender welfare programs to address depression, anxiety and trauma.
- Training of healthcare workers on gender-sensitive healthcare provision to alleviate the risk of bias and improve service provision.
- Increase access to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services, especially for sex work-involved transgender individuals.

Social Work Interventions

- Establish transgender mental health counselling centres to provide psychological support.
- Organise community health outreach campaigns targeting transgender persons to raise awareness about their healthcare rights.
- Work with hospitals and clinics to create trans-friendly policies.
- Offering peer support and mental health workshops to reinforce resilience and self-esteem in transgender individuals.

Community Involvement

Recommendations

- Implement national public awareness campaigns on the benefits of transgender inclusion and to counter stereotypes.

- Support positive transgender media and entertainment representation to color the world in transgender identities.
- Establish safe community spaces and cultural centers where transgender individuals can express themselves freely
- Advocate for family and community acceptance programs to reinforce support systems for transgender people.

Social Work Interventions

- Engagement of community dialogues and sensitization programs on transphobia with the community members and at the grass root level.
- Help organize media training workshops for journalists on how to better depict transgender people in the media.
- Create support groups and mentoring programs to help trans people deal with societal pressures.
- Work with religious and cultural leaders to spread messages of inclusivity and love.

Political and Bureaucratic Representation

Recommendations

- Implement political reservation or affirmative action policies for transgender individuals.
- Create gender-just electoral policies that support trans candidates.
- Transgender persons will be able to access voting rights, identity documents, and government welfare schemes.
- Broad-based implementation of hiring of transgender in public sector jobs and administrative services.

Social Work Interventions

- Provide leadership and advocacy training of transgender individuals to empower them to take part in the political process.
- advocate for the legal documentation process of transgender to access voting and government services.
- Establish policy advisory groups for transgender-inclusive governance.
- Policy Advocates Collaborate with key relevant government agencies to advocate for the representation of transgender people in public administration.

Conclusion

Transgender social life is shaped by overlapping systemic barriers including educational marginalization, employment discrimination, inadequate healthcare access, and societal stigma. Policy intervention Efforts to bridge these gaps adequately require a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach, which will ensure the socio-economic and psychological upliftment of the transgender community and an inclusive society for all.

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