



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF PHYSICALLY DISABLED TRANSGENDERS (M TO F) IN KERALA.

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Abstract

Gender identity or gender expression differ from their assigned sex. In Kerala, transgenders are facing so many problems from the society and family. The main areas of exclusion are educational, medical, employment etc. But when if a transgender is disabling by birth or she has acquired disability she faces a double problem in their life. The main problems are unemployment, Medical care and discrimination from society and also their family. The main physical disabilities are hearing disability, visual impairment, Locomotors disability etc. Transgender are not benefited from any disability rehabilitation services of government and NGO's. The main focus of the study is what are the area they face exclusion in Kerala..

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Introduction:-

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity or gender expression differ from their assigned sex (sex that determined at the time of infant's birth). Broadly, anyone whose identity, appearance or behavior falls outside conventional gender norms can be explained as a transgender. In India, transgender people are visible in public, ridiculed in crude comedy in popular cinemas, shunned and feared but tolerated at rituals where their presence is supposed to be auspicious. They have been 'non-citizens' until very recently, lacking legal recognition, and were inhabitants of a zone where official identification is absent. The effects of this have been devastating for the community. Social and economic benefits are not actually available to them, and also they cannot participate in any political or socio-economic process which requires an officially endorsed identity. The government's response to the community's demands has been sporadic and piecemeal (Editorial The Third Sex 2013).

The transgender community is invisible among the huge population of 1.2 billion in Kerala. There are no situations to estimate their population yet and hence, there is no official estimate of the total population of transgender (TG) community in India. In a country like India, which confirms the gender binary roles of a male or a female, the existence and survival of a third gender are going through tough times and extremely rough paths. Transgender have virtually no safe places because they are thrown away from their own homes and societies. The recently published Report on Human Rights Violations against the Transgender Community (PUCL-K 2003) has documented the kind

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of prejudice that hijras facing. The report shows how hijras have been boycotted from their families, harassed by police officers, how prejudice has been translated to violence in public and private places, such as police stations, prisons, roads and worst of all hospitals and clinics. The main cause, as understood is that the regressive Indian society at large has been unable to come to terms with their 'deviant' and 'nonconformist' gender identity. This has to lead the hijra and Kothi community to be among the most marginalized and stigmatized sections of our society.

In the present time, disabled transgenders are facing double problems from society and family. Most of the families are not aware of the present situation of a transgender and they are not accepting the situation. The majority of the families believed that their child is not normal and they have some mental problems.

Type Of Transgenders:-

In a different place, they know the different name based on their culture and other lifestyles. They are commonly known as hijra, kothi, arvani and thirunangai, jogtas/jogappas, shiva sakthy etc.

Kothi:-

Kothis are a heterogeneous group. 'Kothis can be described as biological males who show varying degrees of 'femininity' - which may be situational and are considered to be male bodies who are supposedly "effeminate" in nature and who switch between wearing male and female attires. Some Kothis have bisexual behavior and get married to women. Kothis are generally of lower socioeconomic status and some engage in sex work for survival. Some proportion of Hijra-identified people may also identify themselves as 'Kothis'. But not all Kothi-identified people identify themselves as transgender or Hijras (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 2014).

Aravanis and 'Thirunangi':-

Hijras in Tamil Nadu are identified as "Aravani". Tamil Nadu Aravanigal Welfare Board, a state government's initiative under the Department of Social Welfare defines Aravanis as "biological males who self-identify themselves as a woman trapped in male's body". Some Aravani activists want the public and media to use the term 'Thirunangi' to refer to Aravanis (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 2014)

Jogtas/Jogappas:-

Jogtas or Jogappas are those persons who are dedicated to and serve as a servant of Goddess Renukha Devi (Yellamma) – whose temples are in Maharashtra and Karnataka. 'Jogta' refers to a male servant of that Goddess and 'Jogti' refers to female servant (who is also sometimes referred to as 'Devadasi'). One can become a 'Jogta' (or Jogti) if it is part of their family tradition or if one finds a 'Guru' (or 'Pujari') who accepts him/her as a 'Chela' or 'Shishya' (disciple). Sometimes, the term 'JogtiHijras' is used to denote those male-to-female transgender persons who are devotees/servants of Goddess Renukha Devi and who are also in the Hijra communities. (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 2014)

Shiv-Shakthis:-

Shiv-Shakthis are considered as males who are possessed by or particularly close to a goddess and who have feminine gender expression. Usually, Shiv-Shakthis are inducted into the Shiv-Shakti community by senior gurus, who teach them the norms, customs, and rituals to be observed by them. (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 2014)

Hijras:-

Hijras are biological males who reject their 'masculine' identity and identify either as women, or "not-men", or "in-between man and woman", or "neither man nor woman". Being a hijra requires adoption by a hijra guru which often also includes payment of membership fee to enrol oneself in a particular gharana (method school) to which the guru belongs with specific community norms and tradition. Membership into a gharana is mandatory as it is only there that the hijras learn the customs, hijra styles of singing and dancing and the coded Farsi language in which the members communicate (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 2014)

Disability:-

Disability is an impairment that may be physical, cognitive, intellectual, mental, sensory, developmental or some combination of these that results in restrictions on an individual's ability to participate in what is considered "normal" in their everyday society.

Disabilities are mainly divided into two broad categories, mental disability, and physical disability. This study is mainly focused only the physical disability of transgender in Kerala state. In Kerala, the visibility of physically disabled transgender is invisible compared to the normal transgender. The major physical disabilities are:

Hearing disability:-

According to PWD act 1995, hearing impairments means loss of sixty decibels or more in the better year in the conversational range of frequencies.

Medically the definition depends on how many decibels of hearing loss you have. A loss that is less than profound is generally considered hard of hearing.

Type of hearing impairment:-

Conductive hearing loss:-

Conductive hearing loss results from defects in the outer or middle ear. The sound is not conducted efficiently to the inner ear. All sounds heard thus become weak and or muffled. Usually, such individuals speak softly irrespective of the surrounding environmental noise. The conductive hearing loss does not exceed a maximum of 60db. when a hearing loss exceeds 60db some deficiency of inner ear functioning is present irrespective of the middle ear involvement.

There two more types of hearing impairments such as sensor neural hearing impairment, mixed hearing loss, central hearing loss and functional hearing loss

Visual impairments:-

Vision impairment is defined as a limitation of one or more functions of the eye (or visual system). The most common vision impairments affect the sharpness or clarity of vision (visual acuity) The normal range of what you can see (visual fields).

Locomotor disability:-

A motor impairment that limits the mobility of individuals varies for each person. A person may require the use of wheelchairs, canes, crutches, braces or prostheses which can hinder access to E & IT control on kiosks or closed products. It's defined as a person's inability to execute distinctive activities associated with moving both himself and objects, from place to place and such inability resulting from the affection of muscular-skeletal and nervous system. neuromotor impairment involves the central nervous system affecting the ability to move, use, feel or control a certain part of the body. An orthopedic impairment involves the skeletal system bones, joints, limbs and associated muscles.

Review of Literature:-

There is no literature available on physically disabled transgender people. There is very few literature available on the issue of transgender on the national level and disability is also an upcoming issue and because of that, there is not much literature exists. In Kerala context, there are no studies conducted in the field of physically disabled transgender.

Author Hunt, Brandon, Mathews, Connie, Milson, Amy, Lammel, and Julie wrote in their research (2006), lesbian with physical disabilities: A qualitative study of their experiences with counseling lesbian and disabled both groups must contend with societal assumptions and misperceptions. In the case of individuals with disabilities, there is the assumption of being able bodied, particularly for those who have invisible disabilities. For lesbian, there is the assumption of heterosexuality. These assumptions mean that individuals who are members of one or both of these groups must make the decision, often on a daily basis about how they will deal with societal misperception including when and how or even whether to come out to other people about their disability and sexual orientation.

Methods:-

The Area of the Study:-

The universe of study is the physically disabled male to female transgender living in Kerala state. On the basis of the community, there is no clear statistics or data available among physically disabled transgender in Kerala. The transgender policy gives approximate statistics among the transgender living in Kerala, in Kerala, more than 25000

transgender are living but the majority of them are invisible in mainstream society because of the negative approaches from the society. In Kerala, Transgender people are visible in some major urban cities, especially in Cochin, Trivandrum, and Calicut. On the other side, disabled Transgender people are invisible in every area because of the discrimination on both sides such as the society and also the same community (transgender community). The researcher identified ten physically disabled Transgender people living in the different areas of Kerala state with the help of community members and collected the information through telephone with the help of interview guide. Research Design

A descriptive research design is used because the researcher is trying to describe the exclusion of physically disabled transgender in Kerala. Study wants to portray the characteristics of a group.

Sampling:-

The researcher used Snowball sampling methods for data collection. The researcher used this sampling method because the sample for the study is rare and limited to a very small subgroup of the population in Kerala. In this research, each transgender respondent is located by chain referral. The sampling size is 10 respondents and the sample belongs to the age group of 25 to 45.

Method and Tools of Data Collection:-

The data collection is based on the primary method and secondary method. In a primary method, data is collected through interview guide prepared by the researcher with the help of experts in the same field. The interview guide has used for the researcher to collect the data from the physically disabled transgender living in Kerala and the secondary methods of data are collected through books, journals, articles, newspaper, and the other sources.

Results and Discussion:-

Kerala is the first state that implemented a policy for transgender with the help of Sangama (Sangama is an NGO working for sexual minorities). The policy published in December 2015. The policy published based on Supreme Court judgment in 2014. The honorable supreme court of India has established the right of equality and equal protection for transgender person under the article of 16, 17 and 18. The policy reveals that transgender people facing many discriminations in every area of their day today life. The main areas are education, health, occupation etc. The policy provides an outlook statistics of transgender in Kerala (Kerala transgender policy 2014).

In total, 10 physically disabled transgender from Kerala state (10 male to female transgender) participated in the study. Respondents ranged in age from 25 to below 45 years of age. The study mainly focuses on the social exclusion of physically disabled transgender people in Kerala. This study revealed that the majority of the Transgender are facing discrimination from every aspect of their life, such as education, occupation, and health care, etc. In this study, most of the respondents are coming from the rural area and the remaining are from the semi-urban area. most of the respondent's monthly income is under the amount Rs. 5000, which means they are facing the exclusion in the workplace. the majority of respondents are married and remaining half of them are legally separated. The rest of them were unmarried. The main reason for separation is that families are not ready to accept their gender identity on the other side they had to face some physical disability.

Most of the respondents have stopped their studies at high school level because the majority of them are faced some negative experience at the time of schooling such as discrimination from school games, teasing from friends, physical harassment, avoidance by the teachers etc and also they faced avoidance on the basis of their physical health, the students and teachers consider that he/she has physically ill and avoided from the physical activities conducted by the institution. The main reason for this avoidance is the unawareness of people about the actual problem faced by the transgender persons and they believed that it is a mental health problem. The family is the first socialization agent of every human. But in the case of transgender people, the family is the main discriminator and they are not ready to accept them as transgender. That are the main problems faced by transgender people in Kerala. The majority of respondents are living with their own family and remaining of them staying with their friends. The majority of the family considered transgender are mentally ill and they try to give health facilities for them but most of the treatments are negatively affected their physical and mental health.

The study clearly proves that they are not getting any type of help from government or other funding agencies on the basis of their disability. the majority of respondents replied that they didn't get any help from the government and remaining of them are getting some help from the government. The Kerala Government implemented some funding

programs and vocational training programs for the physically disabled person for strengthening their life in Kerala. However, the disabled transgender persons are not getting any support and help from government's side. The main reason was the majority of them didn't have any identity proofs like voter's id, license, etc. on the other hand, most of them are discriminated from the public place and meetings. The current study proves that most of the respondents are coming from the rural area and lower economic status. Compared to the normal population the availability of information about the programs and policies are very less. The health care sector is the main area of exclusion faced by transgender based on gender identity. The majority of the respondents have faced discrimination and negative responses from government hospitals based on gender identity and rest of them are moderately facing the discrimination. The study clearly proves that transgender are facing discrimination in every area based on their gender identity. The transgender policy in Kerala has focused only for the normal population because there is no mention about the other sexual minorities and disabled.

Case study:-

Ms. Sreeja (kothy name) is a 26-year-old transgender from a middle-class family in Kerala. She is born as the 'elder son' of her family. Five years before she victimized in an accident in Kerala and lost her left legs. In childhood, her family and relatives were accepting the changes and they forced her to be in female attire. Born in an orthodox Hindu Nair family, she had to follow the strict rules and regulations of their caste. Until the age of 4, she lived in her mother's house and she cherishes a wonderful time there because she was allowed to be in feminine attires and behave like a girl. He believed that he is a girl and had physical appearance and behavior of girls. The primary and secondary schooling was done in a government school. The first sexual abuse she faced was at the age five from her uncle. After that few others also sexually abused her. She faced problems during her high-school level from some of her friends. Her friends started ridiculing and avoiding her because she could not belong to both genders because of her appearance and behavior. In primary school, she could manage to be with girls but in high school, she could not do the same because she had all the body features of a boy. But teachers supported her and got many opportunities to participate in cultural programs. After the higher secondary education, she joined a college in Kerala to pursue graduation. That was the most difficult time in her life because most of the students noticed the changes in her appearance, behavior and physical disabilities. They forced her to do sex with them and became an object of gratification of the people. Harassment and ill-treatment in the college affected her both physically and mentally. Instead of going for the classes, she spent most of her time in a library and appeared for the exam. Meanwhile, she got a friend from a transgender community and became a turning point in her life as he introduced her to his friends of the same community. This helped Sreeja to overcome all ill happenings, discriminations, and atrocities done to her in the past. Recently she participated in some TV programs and other programs related to transgender issues. Even though the family members accept her as a transgender, they could not tolerate her going to TV programs and such other activities thinking that it may bring ill fame to the family. Her dressing causes problems to her family members and recommends not doing the same regularly because they think that she is changing herself totally. She is highly interested in dance and other traditional art forms of Kerala, but her family is not letting her to study that because they are scared that if she studies dance she will fully become a female. After graduation, she joined a private firm as an accountant. There she faced so many sexual assaults from her co-workers during night shifts. She faced lots of negative experience from family and society because most of them considered as physically disabled man and doing sex work. In Kerala, so many welfare programs and policies are available for the physically disabled person but she didn't get any support from there because she born as a male and try to live as a transgender, on the other side there is no valid id proof and others for claiming her gender identity.

Conclusion:-

The transgender person is an individual any age or sex who manifests characteristics, behaviours or self-expression, which in their own or someone else's perception is typical of or usually associated with the person of another gender. Transgender with the disability is one of the emerging areas of the field of disability and there is literature or study has not available in the Indian context. Transgender with facing double disadvantages, firstly they are excluded on the basis of gender, then because of disability and their family was thrown out them as a disabled transgender. On the other side some families are accepting their gender identity and they are supported to live in the society with full of freedom. The study clearly proves that educational institution, work place and health care sectors are the main areas of discriminators in Kerala. The government should implement new programmes and policies for transgender and included the physically or psychologically disabled persons living in the community.

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