Title

**Spectrum of Livelihoods: Transgender People and the Struggle for Paid Work in India**

By

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**Abstract**

My research is a qualitative study, that aims to bring to light some of the contemporary livelihoods and occupations that Indian trans* people are engaged in against the popular notion that trans* people are only in sex work and begging. The thesis will focus on the challenges trans* people face in accessing mainstream livelihoods and how their current and aspired occupations are influenced and shaped by their experiences in their formative years by the gender-binarized world. This will be viewed in light of the structural discrimination and/or violence and marginalization they have to undergo in their personal and professional lives. While economic security may not solve all problems, it in itself is a significant problem for trans* people that needs to be tackled, too, through a source of income that is considered "dignified" in a social context. Livelihood, moreover, holds value beyond basic financial utility, as it forms a crucial part of one's sense of self as well. This association of livelihood/occupation with meanings and connotations goes beyond just monetary means, the term is a loaded one that encompasses different things for different people. The study aims to explore and understand these very connotations, as well as look at the challenges trans* people face in accessing sustainable livelihood opportunities and how the Transgender Act, 2019 influences their livelihood situation.

**Keywords**: livelihood, structural discrimination, intersectionality, transgender, law

## Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted.

for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published

by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of

bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis is accurate:

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Signed: Sanjana Sanjana

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Trans* people in India are one of the most marginalized sections of society. Despite their rich history and culture, they are denied their basic rights and opportunities. Their constant struggle for survival and fundamental rights has been ignored for a long time by those in power. It was only in 2014 that they were recognized as the Third Gender by Indian law and given equal rights as other citizens. They go through multiple levels of marginalization by their families, society, and the law. Rejected by their families, discrimination in school, forced marriage, exclusion by relatives, childhood abuse, being compelled to do sex-work, exploitation by police, and ignorance by the state, are some of the exploitations faced by trans* people daily. The structural discrimination and denial of basic rights make them the most visible marginalized minority in India.

As per 2018 research carried out by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), 96% of individuals identifying as trans* face job rejections and are compelled to resort to inconsistent or degrading means of earning, such as sex work and begging. The inaugural examination into the rights of trans* individuals further unveiled that approximately 92% of them are stripped of the opportunity to partake in any kind of economic engagement within the nation. Even those who possess qualifications encounter job denials due to their gender identity, as highlighted in a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The social, economic, and political exclusion due to the stigmatization of trans* people has become a challenge in accessing "dignified" livelihood opportunities. In this thesis, I explore these exclusions trans* people face which lead to difficulties in accessing livelihood opportunities and challenges in their existing workplaces.

## 1. 1. Some Operational Definitions

Before we dive further into the topic, it's important to understand certain terms and their definitions.

**Livelihood vs. Employment**: While Employment may mean the means through which an individual or group makes its money, livelihood is a broader term (of which employment is a part) and refers to the way a person or group makes a living. While employment is understood as one aspect of work, livelihood encompasses all forms of activities that ensure social security, dignity and sustainable living conditions. Chambers and Conway explain livelihood through 3 aspects; capability, "what a person is capable of doing and being", equity; bringing the minorities or less privileged to the same level by addressing the inequalities first, sustainability; livelihood that is self-reliant and self-sufficient (4). Livelihood ensures multi-dimensional strategies as it encompasses social, economic, and political contexts.

The concept of livelihoods doesn't merely indicate income generation in isolation (employment) but, at the various means and sources from which income is earned, the barriers and challenges, and the intersectional differences between people and groups that hinder or facilitate employment (or the lack of it thereof) as well as how the income and employment opportunities impact the lives of people or groups.

Through this thesis, I am looking at livelihood to provide a wider and varied lens to understand the processes by which trans* people earn a living and how the social stigma, as well as institutional discrimination, impact their livelihoods. A knowledge of these processes, along with structural marginalization is pertinent to understanding how multidimensional marginalization impacts the livelihood situation of trans* people.

**Transgender Persons**: According to the historian Susan Stryker, the term transgender was coined in 1970 and originally referred to people, "who do not seek surgical alteration of their bodies but do habitually wear clothing that represents a gender other than the one to which they were assigned at birth" (7). However, gender can't be just restricted to appearance or clothing, it goes far beyond that. Stryker takes a broader approach and defines transgender as encompassing "all identities or practices that cross over, cut across, move between, or otherwise queer socially constructed sex/gender boundaries" including, but not limited to, "transsexuality, heterosexual transvestism, gay drag, butch lesbianism, and such non-European identities as the Native American berdache or the Indian *Hijra*" (12). Some trans* people feel they exist beyond the two conventional binarized gender categories of men and women, maybe somewhere in between, beyond or with neither of the two gender categories.

In this thesis, I will be referring to the legal definition of trans* people in India under the Protection of Rights Bill, 2019 which describes a transgender person as a "person whose gender does not match with the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes trans-man or trans-woman, (whether or not such person has undergone Sex Reassignment Surgery or hormone therapy or laser therapy or such other therapy) person with intersex variations, genderqueer and persons having such socio-cultural identities as *kinner, hijra, aravani and jogta* "(Government of India 2). The definition is quite broad and ambiguous as some of the gender identities aren't defined.  It's also problematic to put intersex people, as intersex is a biological identity and not a gender identity. The category of *hijra* also does not constitute a gender identity, as many scholars explain, "it is a specific group of people (which could include transfeminine individuals, kothis and women) with specific religious and linguistic practices" (Bhattacharya 10). While this definition is appreciated by many, it is still not sufficient and remains problematic as "It clusters all gender non-conforming persons into one group, without accounting for key concepts such as

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gender identity and gender expressions. This perpetuates the colonial mindset of treating transgender persons as a homogenous group" (Sriram 120). It's imperative that the State provides clear, inclusive, and comprehensive terms so that all trans* identities feel understood about their identities by the law.

Due to the diversity of trans* identities in India and the complexities of each one of them, in my thesis, I am exploring the livelihood situations of broadly four trans* identities: transmen, transwomen, transsexuals and *hijra* transwomen. I am working with these four categories because these are the ones reflected in the interviews and the people, I was able to find. This thesis doesn't explore all the identities, so I will not generalize the experiences of these four categories as the general experience of all trans* identities, but these four categories do encompass a lot of experiences of all trans* people. The scope of the paper is limited but I would want the research to be taken forward for other identities.

The four trans* identities that are represented in this thesis are conceptually explained below:

*Hijra* **Transwomen**: In the Indian subcontinent, *Hijras* are eunuchs, intersex or trans* people who live in communities that follow the *guru-chela* (master-disciple) system. The community has its unique rituals, customs, and practices, which are led by a guru or leader, and all these make the *hijra* community different from other regional trans* communities. *Hijras* are commonly associated with transwomen. Nanda calls *hijras* neither men nor women, but also recognizes the need of the community to see them as women (120). Most often, *hijras* can be transwomen, but it's not necessary that every *hijra* person would be a transwoman. Lakshmi Tripathi who is a celebrated *hijra* person in India, says in her autobiography, "When I became a *hijra*, a great

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burden was lifted off my head. I felt relaxed. I was now neither a man nor a woman. I was a *hijra*. I had my own identity" (Tripathi 43).

There are various gender identities within the *hijra* community itself. Mostly, *hijras* who identify themselves as women are engaged in prostitution and/or begging or earning a living through *badhai* (giving blessings to newborn males). In my paper, I will be focusing on *hijras* who identify themselves as women (read *hijra* transwomen) and have been part of *hijra* community but are engaged in mainstream livelihood currently.

**Transgender man:** Refers to a person whose sex at birth is female, but they identify and express themselves as a male person, or "man".

**Transgender woman**: Refers to a person whose sex at birth is male, but they identify and express themselves as a female person, or "woman". They can be part of the *hijra* community, but not every transwoman joins the *hijra* community. Some transwomen don't like to be associated with the *hijra* community due to the stigmas attached to them.

**Transsexual:** A person whose gender identity is different from their biological sex, who undergoes medical treatment to change their biological sex, often to align it with their gender identity. They could be transmen, transwomen, or may fall into any other category of trans* identities or none at all.

I will be using trans* and not 'trans' in this paper as the definition by the Indian legal system is problematic and the term 'trans' which is a Western concept, doesn't encompass all the regional trans identities of India.

## 1.2. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the varied livelihood avenues that trans* people in India are currently working in and what barriers they face therein beyond sex-work and begging.

Through this thesis, I explore the structural and institutional discrimination and marginalization trans* people have to endure even before they go into the labour market, how their subjective experiences impact their livelihood situations and the challenges they face at the workplace.

I worked on this topic because the few studies available only address the most visible livelihoods for trans* people in India: begging, and sex work. My aim in this thesis was to go beyond these visible livelihood spaces to understand other spaces where trans* people are engaged and how their social context impacts their livelihood situations, the challenges they face to access dignified livelihood opportunities, how it impacts their aspirations and their living situation, both economically and socially. Many interviewees told me that the systematic exclusion they face even before they start work becomes a barrier to creating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

One of the interviewees explained, "Policies and researches completely exempt the personal experiences we go through and that's why the policies or government schemes don't work as they don't see the challenges with livelihood opportunities with our personal experiences, how the discrimination that starts from an early age impacts our employment" (Raj, transman). The single-axis framework eludes trans* people's experiences from formative years in the "conceptualization, identification and remediation" (Crenshaw 149). It's important for me to include these subjective experiences of exclusion from different institutions that impact the livelihood situation of trans* people. We can't see livelihood in isolation, we have to see where the marginalization starts and how it affects the rights and opportunities of trans* people in the labour market which will be the main objective of this thesis.

## 1.3. Context of Trans* People in India

Trans* individuals constitute a marginalized group whose happiness, sadness, and mere existence remain unnoticed by the typical majority of cis-gender individuals. Indian culture has historically displayed acceptance of various sexual and gender identities, as can be observed in mythology, traditional stories, and ancient texts like the Kamasutra. The *Hijra* community stands as the oldest officially recognized non-binary gender classification, often perceived as neither exclusively male nor female. In India, people's comprehension of trans* individuals are largely restricted to the *hijra* community, a situation reinforced by governmental policies. At times, the terms "transgender" and "*hijra*" are even used interchangeably, mainly due to the prominence of the *hijra* community as the primary visible representative of this demographic.

The idea of putting all different social groups under one umbrella is problematic as "it collapsed all of the differences between the various social classes into one" (Gannon 87). It erases the experiences and positionality of other trans* identities, thus not sufficiently addressing their issues.

Trans* people enjoyed respect in Hindu culture until the British colonial administration criminalized all sexual relations that didn't fall under heterosexuality. Since then, trans* people have been marginalized and discriminated against by society and by the Indian legal system. Society marginalizes them due to the stigmas attached to them, and their livelihood choices (begging, and sex-work). The legal system designs policies and schemes around *hijras* without reflecting the broad spectrum of transgender terms, intersectional differences (by class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity among other aspects) and the unique positionality of each trans* identity, thus excluding other trans* identities from the framework of policies and laws. It was only in 2014 that the law recognized trans* people as a "third gender". This deliberate ignorance

and discrimination towards the already marginalized trans* people further push them towards the margins.

**Livelihood Situation**: As per the 2011 census, there are 488,000 trans* people in India. This data was collected under the category of 'Other' as trans* people still didn't have legal recognition by 2011. In the census, they collected details on employment, caste and literacy. Despite such a large population, access to employment opportunities is still a struggle. "Economic opportunities in India stem either from formal education or by being a part of a family enterprise such as agriculture. An abandoned trans* youth is unlikely to have either" (Sriram 129). Insufficient access to educational amenities and healthcare services, alongside various other societal elements, signifies an ongoing infringement of the rights of trans* individuals. This situation not only curtails their possibilities in the workforce but also confines their chances for occupational engagement. The lack of acceptance within families leads many transwomen to find refuge within the *hijra* community. A significant portion of trans* individuals relocate from their hometowns to major cities like Delhi and Mumbai, because of oppressive circumstances within their homes and educational institutions. These conditions, coupled with limited livelihood prospects, drive them to eventually engage in begging and prostitution.

The Indian government and civil societies are running training programmes for trans* people but that doesn't necessarily solve the issues of employment. In a Report by UNDP, trans* people stated that they don't lack in training but in job opportunities to implement those training and this opinion was also echoed by trans* activists in the interviews. At times, existing skill sets do not transform into livelihoods due to a lack of resources and/or institutional support. Leaving homes early due to non-acceptance from families or due to extreme levels of abuse, also means that they don't have proper identity documents due to confiscation from family or because of

leaving them behind without knowing the importance of them. And even when they might have their birth certificate etc., it might not match the documents made after their sex-reassignment surgery (SRS), if any.

"While some transgender persons coming from better-off economic classes manage to achieve a certain degree of economic agency, certain communities—especially the *hijras*—lack opportunities. Even those who are qualified face discrimination and prejudice" (Sriram 130). There is bias in hiring, policies, compensations, and privileges that trans* people face when looking for jobs. At other times, employers might simply reject or not get back to qualified trans* employees due to their non-conforming gendered behaviours and/or appearance. Some of the trans* people who are able to garner educational resources and thereby a job that they consider "dignified" are able to move out of the vicious circle of non-acceptance and exploitation and even aid in the uplifting of their "community" members. However, the opportunities are also dependent on their social positions such as class, caste, region, trans* identity, access to education, and support of family, among others.

## 1.4. Structural Discrimination of Trans* People in the Indian Legal System

Government-sanctioned monitoring and societal marginalization of trans* individuals trace their origins back to the colonial period, specifically to the British government's enactment of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871. Guided by colonial powers' ideals of masculinity, this legislation classified *hijras* as 'eunuchs,' leading to their classification as criminals due to the presumption that any non-heterosexual sexual activities were unnatural. Under this Act, trans* and homosexual individuals were barred from adopting children and formalizing wills in their names. Additionally, their activities like dancing, singing, and involvement in sex work were deemed criminal and disruptive to society.

While this Act was nullified in 2019, disparities in education, healthcare, and employment opportunities persisted. Following extensive activism and advocacy by civil society and trans* activists, the Supreme Court of India took a significant step in 2014 by acknowledging 'transgender' as the 'third gender.' The court initiated the establishment of a committee under the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) to establish legal rights for trans* people. The court's ruling suggested the implementation of reservations (quotas) for trans* individuals in both employment and educational institutions. Moreover, it affirmed the right of trans* people to assert their self-identified gender without undergoing sex reassignment surgery.

However, in 2016, the Indian government formulated its own interpretation, leading to the dismissal of various NALSA recommendations, including the recognition of self-perceived gender identity and the reservations (quota) system in jobs and educational institutions.

Though the Indian law now recognizes trans* people as the third gender and prohibits discrimination in education, employment, health services, and other rights of equality in employment, health and education, trans* activists and interviewees say that it doesn't provide tangible solutions to their problems. According to a newspaper article, "the new legislation purports to protect transgender rights — but many trans* activists say it does the exact opposite. They say it's a huge blow to India's already vulnerable transgender community and undoes a lot of progress made over the past few years" (The Hindu 2). There are several gaps in the law which I will explore in Chapter 5.

The background and current context of trans* people in India highlight the social, political, and economic marginalization of trans* people due to the structural discrimination that takes place. Their livelihood situation is dependent on the legal policies and programs which don't take into the intersection position of trans* people and experiences in their formative

experiences which leads to the continued struggle for a "dignified" livelihood. The thesis will explore these gaps that narrow the livelihood opportunities for trans* people.

## 1.5. Conceptual Framework & Theoretical Scholarship

The livelihood challenges faced by trans* individuals in India can be comprehensively analyzed through Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality (1989), which acknowledges the complex interplay of various overlapping identities and social factors that contribute to their marginalized position. Trans* people in India confront a multitude of societal facets, such as class, caste, region, education, and gender, which intersect and compound the discrimination and exclusion they experience due to their trans* identity. Laws and policies look at the "single-axis framework" that distorts the multiple levels of marginalization experienced by trans* people (Crenshaw 139). Looking at "identity politics" is crucial for understanding the nuanced inequalities they face, as it recognizes that their struggles stem not solely from their trans* identity but from the amalgamation of various societal aspects that shape their lived experiences (Crenshaw 145).

The heterogeneous nature of the trans* people in India highlights the significance of recognizing how different identities intersect and influence their livelihood opportunities. For instance, individuals from lower castes and classes often encounter heightened levels of discrimination and limited access to economic opportunities compared to those from upper castes and classes. Crenshaw's concept underscores the importance of considering these intersecting identities to address the systemic exclusion faced by trans* people. By adopting a structural intersectionality approach, it becomes possible to develop comprehensive strategies that tackle stigma, prejudice, and violence across all dimensions of their lives.

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This intersectional lens is particularly relevant when evaluating the impact of existing laws and policies for trans* individuals. Many of these policies, while intended to counter discrimination and violence, predominantly target visible segments of the trans* people, such as *hijras* and transwomen, while inadvertently neglecting the broader spectrum of trans* identities. Additionally, these policies use the "single-axis analysis" thus often failing to account for the diverse social, cultural, and economic contexts in which trans* individuals exist, resulting in flawed and ineffective approaches (Crenshaw 139). An intersectional analysis of these policies reveals that they often treat trans* identity as a static, singular entity rather than one that is intricately shaped by various intersecting factors.

The livelihood challenges faced by trans* individuals in India necessitate an intersectional perspective to fully comprehend the intricate web of inequalities they confront. Crenshaw's intersectionality concept offers a valuable tool for dissecting the "multidimensional" aspects of discrimination and exclusion, emphasizing the importance of considering the overlapping identities and social factors that contribute to their marginalization (Crenshaw 149). By adopting this approach, I have made an inclusive and subjective case through my thesis paper to address the complex realities of trans* people's lives in India.

I have used contributions from the book *Transgender India* (2022) which is an edited volume by Douglas A. Vakoch. The book provides a comprehensive overview of trans* people in India. It covers various aspects such as history, identity, challenges, current context, law and employment of trans* people. It provides a holistic understanding of the experiences of trans* people in India, which was essential for a thorough analysis of livelihood issues. Unlike other literature, this book focuses on all trans* identities in India and doesn't restrict itself to the *hijra* community. The chapters on *hijra* community gave a good perspective on the background of

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*hijras* and how they are different and yet related to other trans* identities in their experiences. The book highlights the imposing and unbroken narratives on *hijras* that not only impact the *hijra* community but also other trans* identities.

The book captures the vast history of trans* people in India which gave a good understanding of the background vis-à-vis the current context. It also draws on extensive research via interviews and surveys which was important for the credibility and reliability of the information provided in the book and it also helped in comparing the experiences of the interviewees in the paper with the experiences shared by interviewees in the book.

The book also critically analyses the position of trans* people from an intersectional lens, by considering multiple factors like class, region, and religion which was important to understand the intersectional position of the interviewees. Its emphasis on the fact that experiences of trans* people in India are not monolithic but shaped by various intersecting identities and contexts was important to understand the nuanced challenges and livelihood issues faced by trans* individuals in different parts of India. The concept of dignity and respect in the book helped me to understand the various meanings attached to it, what it means in an Indian context, how it impacts trans* people and the role of the State in it. While the book covers various topics, it especially addresses the challenges trans* people face in accessing livelihood, the problems they face at the workplace and the piecemeal approach of the state when it comes to policies and programs which was useful to understand the livelihood situation of trans* people.

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## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research Design

The study will be a resourceful addition to the existing literature and discourse livelihood patterns of the trans* people in India. The richness of the study lies in the fact that the findings are grounded in the understanding of the everyday challenges, ostracization and multiple marginalization faced by trans* people.

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research design is employed, with the aim to explore and understand the subjective experiences of trans* people in the livelihoods and occupations they are engaged in. The qualitative research was considered the best in order to intricately understand the subjective realities of Indian trans* people, their livelihood and occupational experiences, as well as the interlinkages between them.

The method used was a semi-structured in-depth one-on-one interview. Themes were based on relevant literature and the data needed for meeting research objectives. The interview guide covered a wide range of topics related to the subjective experiences of the participants and was refined after the initial responses of the interviewees. I also tweaked or added more questions based on the interviewee's responses. The topics were related to familial experiences, challenges at work, professional aspirations, opinions on legal policies and schemes and livelihood situations.

### 2.2. Sampling

The universe of this research includes people who identify themselves as trans* people from four gender identities under the "transgender" umbrella; that is – transwomen, transmen, transsexuals and *hijra* transwomen.  Due to the lack of visibility and access, other trans* identities couldn't be part of the interview. The organization I reached out to for interviewees

mostly worked with transwomen. They said that there are a lot of other trans* identities but they don't come out or aren't as visible as transwomen. Even through my networks, I intended to find more trans* people from different categories but the only visible trans* identity was of transwomen. By the end, I had to stick to the above-mentioned four trans* identities. Also, the restriction of travelling back to India posed a big challenge in reaching out to more organizations or people.

I, therefore, used two types of non-probability sampling: purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The main purposeful sample site was an organization based in Chennai, India named PeriFerry, which works for the skill enhancement and employment of trans* people. The founder of the organization connected me to trans* people based on their availability and accessibility, and sometimes the interviewees gave me contacts of their trans* friends or colleagues, in a snowball manner.

The sampling size is diverse, in terms of region, class, caste, languages, ethnicities, and religion., and participants in the study represent different states of the country.  India is a diverse country and narrowing down the participants to one or two backgrounds would mean a possible reduction or simplification of the diversities, diversities relating to different trans* identities, varying socio-cultural contexts and geographical locations, as well as different livelihoods and occupations. All the diversities have been taken into consideration while examining their status.

The dominant cisgender and often heteronormative view about trans* people are that they must be earning their living through either begging and/or sex work. This view is certainly misguided and based on lack of or incorrect knowledge about trans* people, dominant stereotypes, and stigma against them, or all of the above. To disrupt, if not completely break this stereotype against trans* people and throw light on some of the diverse range of occupations that

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trans* people are engaged in, for my interviews I chose to seek out trans* people who at one time were engaged in any paid livelihood or occupation except for sex work and begging.

## 2.3. Setting

Being placed in a different country, away from India, posed a barrier in reaching out to the participants and interviewing them face-to-face. The interviews were carried out in a blended mode – with twelve interviews being on Zoom calls, to enable some face-to-face interaction and rapport building with the respondent, while three were conducted over phone calls, as the participants deemed that as more comfortable. This method was adopted as it was considered a more feasible means for reaching out to and connecting with participants who belonged to a different geographical location or state. The virtual interviews allowed space for anonymity and for reaching out to participants from different locations.

## 2.4 Challenges Faced During the Interview Process

There were challenges faced during the interview process. Before every interview, I was worried about whether I would be able to form a meaningful rapport with trans* people and not come across as a cisgender researcher romanticizing the pain and traumas of trans* people. As and when successive interviews happened, I was able to overcome this initial apprehension and form not just a comfortable rapport with the participants but also built sustaining bonds with the people. The conversations were also very reciprocal and two-sided in nature, where I felt comfortable sharing experiences from my own life – which in turn enabled the free flow and sense of safe space in the interview process, both for the participants and me.

However, it wasn't always a rosy picture. Many times, participants drew up their guards while speaking, knowing that they were speaking to an outsider to their "community". It was somewhat tough for me to break the outsider-insider dichotomy, as to where and how to find the

perfect balance between softly nudging and pushing the participants. In finding this balance, the course on Oral History really helped me understand the process of personal interviews and the position of the interviewer and interviewee. The nuances I learned from the course helped me to be conscious of the interviewer's own biases and privileged position. I constantly reminded myself to not fall prey to the socially constructed binaries and dichotomies that we're all always surrounded by, and to allow myself to listen with no prejudiced notions.

## 2.5. Participants' Profiles

The sample size comprises thirteen trans* people belonging to four trans* identities: transwomen, transmen, *hijra* transwomen, and transsexuals. I have also interviewed two professionals working with trans* people, one of them works with the Indian government in developing livelihood policies and programs for trans* people and another professional has its own NGO that works with queer and trans* people on education. The rich experience of the professionals from different sectors helped me understand how the policies and programs were designed by the government and their impact on the ground.

The sampling criteria included Indians self-identifying as trans* persons as defined by Indian law and currently or previously engaged in paid livelihood besides sex-work and begging. I have attempted to cover trans* people from different class, caste, and region to understand the differences in their position and experiences. Along with their education qualification and occupation, I have also tried to capture their residence situation to understand their financial and social position.

**Table 1.** (Pseudonyms have been used throughout to maintain the confidentiality of the participants)

| Name of Participant | Preferred Pronouns | Gender Identity | Current Region of Residence | Highest Educational Qualification | Current Occupation/ Most Recent Occupation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Naika | She/Her or They/Them (comfortable with either) | Transwoman | North India; Residing in a rent place | Graduate | Working as an electrical engineer |
| Zohra | She/Her | Transwoman | North India; Residing at a friend's place | Grade 5th | India's first trans* person photojournalist |
| Rita | She/her or They/Them (comfortable with either) | Transwoman | South West India; Residing with her parents | Pursuing her MA in Social Work | Works with an NGO |
| Teerthana | She/her | Transwoman | North West India; Lives alone in her self-owned house | Grade 10th | Works with an NGO and takes up modeling projects |

| Dia | She/her | Transwoman | North-East India; Lives with her friend | Grade 5th | Works in a factory |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maahika | She/Her | Transsexual | South-West India; Residing with her trans* sister | Post Graduate | Takes up modelling projects |
| Akirti | She/Her or They/Them (comfortable with either) | Transsexual | North India; Residing with their parents currently | Graduate | Works with an NGO |
| Shanti | She/Her | Transsexual | North India Living with a trans* friend | Grade 5th | Hosts birthday parties for children - event management |
| Sahiba | She/Her | Hijra Transwoman | South India; Residing at a rented accommodation | Grade 10th | Worked as a sex-worker previously and now works in a factory |
| Sheeba | She/her | Hijra Transwoman | North East India; lives alone in her self-owned home | Graduate | Worked as a sex-worker with Hijra community previously and then worked in a bank. |

| Name | | | | | Currently looking for a job |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Ankit | He/his, They/Them (comfortable with any) | Transman | North West, Residing with parents | Graduate | Working as a content writer with a media company |
| Vir | He/Him | Transman | South East India; Lives with his trans* friend | Graduate | Not working currently; previously worked in a factory |
| Kiranraj | Him | Transman | South East India; Residing with his partner | Post Graduate | Used to work as a govt teacher, now works with an NGO |

**Table 2.** Professionals working with and for trans* people.

| Name | Gender Identity | Region | Profession |
|------|-----------------|--------|------------|
| Shuvajit | Man | South-West India | Works with the Ministry of Rural Development on programs related to livelihoods of trans* people |
| Rituparna | Transwoman | North-East India | Runs an NGO for education of trans* people |

## 2.6. Ethical Considerations

Trans* people are a highly marginalized and vulnerable population, which means that any research conducted with and for them needs to consider consent and confidentiality concerns of trans* people. During the research, I made sure to seek active consent and expressions of willingness from the participants by briefing them about the research intentions and outcomes before every interview. As a researcher, I made efforts to not reinforce dominant stereotypes and prejudices. This becomes all the more necessary for this research, as the population being studied, that is, trans* people have already been facing heightened vulnerability and oppression. To preserve their anonymity, pseudonyms have been used to describe the participants and the interviews are stored in software with complete outside access. All the data will be removed permanently after the review of the research paper.

## 2.7. Language & Terminology

I will be using the word 'trans'* instead of 'trans' to better capture the non-specificity of the word's meaning as these mainstream narratives are based on only those of Western concepts and the narrow understanding of Indian lawmakers. I am using these terms and not an Indian term for trans* people as there aren't one term in the Indian languages because of the diversity of languages in India.

The interviews were conducted in both English and Hindi depending on the comfort of the participants. Interviews in *Hindi* have been transcribed in Hindi and then later translated into English for this paper.

## 2.8. Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out manually without the usage of any technical software. After the data collection, all the interviews, which ranged from 1.5-2.5 hours, long were

translated, and transcribed in English. Thereafter, the transcripts were read and revised, and coded. After the coding process, all the codes and corresponding narratives from the transcripts were then culled together on an Excel Sheet, which became the master sheet or the Codebook. Similar codes and their corresponding narratives were color-coded based on themes and focus areas. This enabled me to compare the codes from various interviews, identify similar and repeating codes, and come up with sub-themes. Again, similar sub-themes were conjoined to derive themes. The thematic analysis of the narratives allowed for a more systematic understanding and representation of the gathered data, making sure that the lives and experiences of each of the participants were included.

In the following chapters, my thesis will explore the experiences of trans* people in their formative years and how those experiences of discrimination due to gender non-conformativity impact their livelihood opportunities. Challenges in accessing employment in the mainstream labour market and the impact of Transgender Act 2019 on the livelihood of trans* people will also be analyzed.

## CHAPTER 3: Othering in a Binarized World: Exclusion, Discrimination, and Violence Against Trans* People in their Formative Years

Studies have indicated that the gender and sexual identities of trans* individuals might become obscured in society as a result of heteronormative and binary concepts. Moreover, a considerable number of trans* individuals continue to encounter notable levels of stigma and discrimination (Gunby and Butler). The repercussions of stigma and exclusion infiltrate nearly every aspect of their lives – whether it's the absence of supportive emotional connections with friends and family, the realm of education, the domain of employment, finding a partner, and beyond.

The primary aim of my research is to delve into these encounters with exclusion and discrimination during the formative years, which have been observed to influence the experiences of trans significantly negatively* individuals in their professional and occupational domains. Throughout the course of interviews, a common thread emerged: the exclusion they faced started long before they entered the workforce. Their personal experiences within their homes and schools have lasting implications on their current livelihoods, yet these occurrences are often overlooked by policies and welfare programs. Consequently, in this section, I am directing my attention towards exploring the consequences of intersecting types of discrimination and marginalization through the real-life encounters of those who challenge traditional gender norms. I am delving into trans* people's experiences interwoven with the frustration stemming from attempts to secure a livelihood and gain access to social safeguards and rights, to comprehend the inherent structural requirements of trans* individuals.

## 3.1: Agents of Gendered Conditioning and Discrimination: Parents and Family Members

Parents and/or family members, particularly those who are closely linked to the individual – either physically or relationally – constitute one of the earliest and most pivotal forces of socialization in the lives of trans* people. Socialization into the ways and traditions of the society, culture, customs etc. begins at an early age in the personal sphere. And, because this kind of socialization of values and norms begins at such an early age when the child is especially impressionable and in the most nascent stage of learning about the world, this conditioning and socialization stays with them for years to come, or perhaps a lifetime, meaning, that they deeply impact the person. Sometimes a child ends up internalizing the stigma with which their parents view them, which impacts their identity and many times, access to opportunities.

For a trans* child, growing up in a cis heteronormative society is almost like living in hell with no support system. The constant struggle with their own identity is itself a huge barrier that trans* people continue to struggle with and with little to no support from their parents, it becomes even more challenging. Almost all interviewees faced verbal abuse from their parents and family members to the extent that some of them even ran from their homes. Complete dismissal of their identities and constant abuse hugely impacts the mental state of the child and some of them carry that trauma in their personal and professional space later in life. "Anxiety, depression, suicidality associated with transgender children is not inherent rather is the result of bullying, rejection and disrespect" (Jaddidi and Sharma 2763).

Maahika, a transsexual, talked about the extreme lack of support as well as emotional and verbal abuse from her family. She shared:

> There was violence because of my gender. They used to curse me a lot, manhandled
> me, and used to say things like "why don't you die". The abuses they hurled at me

still ring in my ears. My elder brother said, "why do you live this way? If you have to live this way, then leave the house, or go die. My father also says, "Had we known that you'd be this way, we wouldn't have given birth to you in the first place. And many more such things, which I cannot even explain.

Mahika's experience isn't a standalone one, but one shared by almost every interviewee, wherein they don't receive love and affection, much less tangible monetary support from birth families. Sometimes lack of acceptance takes the form of hostility and/or violence from the families towards the trans* person. Many participants shared that their families used several strategies and mechanisms to try to push them back into the gender binary. These ranged from subtle coercion strategies to more violent and coercive ones, each of which had a huge negative impact on trans* individuals in terms of their self-esteem and how they viewed themselves, as well as their health, both physical and mental. 3 out of 13 interviewees shared traumas such as those of Theerthana's: "My family took me to a psychiatrist and a psychologist as they thought I was not mentally fine. They thought that it was an illness and thus can be treated. They wanted me to go for conversion therapy, but I resisted…I was about 18 years old then. Due to all this, I left home".

Sometimes, families of trans* people can be ignorant, or in denial regarding the gender identity of their children due to their own lack of understanding or the shame and stigma attached to trans* people. Denial or considering gender dysphoria as a "delusion" by the parents is in a way families' cisgender heteronormative way of "coping" with their child's gender non-conformativity" (Nanda 189). Shanti (transsexual) shared, "During those days my parents took it as child's play or a delusion that will go away. So that's why I couldn't understand what I was feeling or talk to anyone". This also highlights the lack of awareness about trans* identities by

the families, and the corresponding lack of mainstream discourse on this topic, due to which families are often genuinely unable to understand their child's gender non-conforming behaviour. Their understanding is limited to the knowledge about the *hijra* community and thus not accepted by the families due to the stereotypes and taboos attached to *hijras*.

The response of families has been found to be different for transmen and transwomen. Many transwomen shared their experiences of being rejected by their parents because they acted and looked like "girls". Sheeba (*hijra* transwoman) shared, "My parents couldn't see me in *sarees* or *salwar kameez* [women's traditional garments in India] and the idea of me going outside the home wearing it, really scared them. The constant thought of imagining me looking like a woman didn't go well with them. So, when I started wearing makeup and skirts, they just couldn't take it anymore and asked me to leave the house."

Identification is different from appearance and when the appearance becomes visible, it leads to more marginalization and discrimination. For transwomen, the identification can be challenging but often more challenging is the appearance. For a man to be dressed in a woman's garment leads to more discrimination and harassment than a woman dressed in a male garment because of cultural sexism that exists in India where there is a huge preference for a male child so if a female child wears "male" garments, it can be easily given a free pass but if a male child wears "female" garments, the transgression isn't accepted as it is looked down upon for a man to be looking like a woman. In a patriarchal society, any marker of feminity in men is ridiculed and discouraged.

Sometimes, education and exposure become important component in determining families' understanding or lack of understanding of trans* identities. For instance, Sheeba (*hijra* transwoman) was raised in a lower-middle-class family, with her parents not having any

education. They didn't take her to any family functions or even invite her to her grandmother's funeral. Trans* people's parents, especially those raised in low-income families, feel constant shame about the identities and appearance of their children and one of the main reasons that came out of the interviewees was lack of exposure and education. 4 out of 13 interviewees were accepted by their families and all of them were from educated, high caste backgrounds and from the south and northeast region of India which has the highest level of education. Rituparna, a transwoman, and a trans* activist from northeast mentioned:

> My parents were educated and gave me the freedom to be whoever I wanted to be. I think because of their education and being from northeast region, it opened their minds to a lot of areas which is not available to my trans* friends from north of India as northeast is quite vocal and progressive as compared to many other regions. The situation of girls itself is horrible in north of India, can't imagine what would happen to trans* people and maybe that's why we don't have much representation of trans* people from these regions.

Region became an important marker of intersectionality as India is a large country and each region varies from another. Participants from the south of India had better access to education and opportunities than participants from other areas. South India has the highest level of literacy level in India as compared to other regions. The level of education being higher made it a little easier for participants from the south to avail themselves of job opportunities than participants from the north or other regions of India. All the participants from the south of India spoke good English and some of their parents are also educated and open-minded about their identities but this was not the case with people from other parts of India.

In regions or families with a lack of education and resources, there is a fear of being ostracized from the community or being shamed for their children's identity. In Rita's (transwoman)case, her family was reprimanded by her neighbours and landlord for Rita's gender expressions to the point that they were threatened to leave the rented place. Thus, in order to be part of the cis-gendered society, to be accepted by them, many times parents abandon their trans* children which leaves the child to struggle with basic needs. Abandonment by parents also leads to missing out on educational opportunities that are generally available to other children. Ultimately, they end up on the streets engaged in begging or prostitution, struggling to make ends meet (Nanda).

Many times, when abandoned by their parents, they join the *hijra* community due to their acceptance of trans* identities and their livelihood model. However, once they become part of a *hijra* community, it is difficult to get out of the vicious cycle and even if some of them want to get out of it, employers don't give jobs to them due to the stigma attached to the *hijra* community. There could be different experiences for different categories of trans* identities. For instance, a *hijra* transwoman identity would also be related to the general understanding of *hijra* people. Even if a *hijra* transwoman gets out of the *hijra* community to work in mainstream occupations, the stigmas attached to the *hijra* community create barriers to entering into mainstream jobs. For example, Sheeba, a *hijra* transwoman, who is also a graduate, didn't get a job in the bank because of her experience as a prostitute. She shared that people would approach her for sex at her workplace even when she had left prostitution years ago which made her leave her job. The gender differences of different trans* categories create diverse experiences when it comes to livelihood opportunities and experiences.

Lack of family support deprives a trans* child of basic needs and unfulfillment of those needs creates a huge impact on their livelihood choices and options. Almost all the interviewees didn't have support from their families and left their homes at an early stage in their lives which impacted their education and in turn, their livelihood opportunities. "According to a study by the National Institute of Epidemiology around 60,000 transgender persons across 17 states found that large population of persons received no support from their biological parents" (Jaddidi and Sharma 2578).

Many trans* people are disinherited from property rights and thus the lack of financial support from their parents leads many transwomen to join the *hijra* community as they have a communal mode of livelihood. Many also join the *hijra* community for love and support which trans* people didn't receive from their birth family and once they join the *hijra* community, they get into the vicious cycle of begging and sex work and thus the chances of joining or getting employment in mainstream occupations get even more difficult. Moreover, it is hard to find people who employ *hijras* or trans* people. And if they get the job, then they might not be able to access family schemes provided by employers to people with families.

Evidently, when a trans* child faces discrimination and marginalization within their family due to not conforming to traditional gender norms, these encounters become internalized, subsequently influencing their later experiences in the job market. If the individual is compelled to leave home during adolescence or chooses to do so, it exposes them to a range of detrimental consequences linked to being homeless and impoverished. The absence of emotional and financial backing from their family leaves a significant void that becomes challenging to address in the future, thereby affecting a variety of experiences and prospects.

## 3.2. Agents of Gendered Conditioning and Discrimination: School

From a young age, gendered concepts are sustained through institutional channels, and formal educational institutions like schools play a significant role in systematically reinforcing binary notions. On a daily basis, individuals construct, enact, and internalize gender performances within frameworks that endorse specific gender behaviours. These behaviours are overseen by both educators and peers. Schools not only give rise to gender identities but also regulate them, leading to recurring cycles of confirming these identities (Butler).

In the context of schools, both students and teachers engage in the expression of their gender and sexual identities. Aspects like uniforms, textbooks, language, and infrastructure further sustain heterosexuality as the exclusive norm. Trans* children who don't conform to traditional gender roles are susceptible to hostility from both school authorities and heterosexual peers. In the meantime, educators face considerable limitations when addressing sexual diversity. Any deviation from the established norms of heterosexuality is met with shame and disciplinary action.

During the interviews, some very surprising and varied experiences came out. While experiences of discrimination were ever-present in all the narratives, the intensity and form varied. Unlike the family space, where there might at times be an absence of overt violence and harassment, the school space is unrelenting. The three main agents of gendered socialization and conditioning in the school space are the teachers, friends, and peers.

### 3.2.1. "Corrective" Mechanisms at School by Teachers

The socialization by the teachers can take the form of covert mechanisms as subtle "correction" in the ways of talking and walking or can take more overt and violent forms such as

targeted emotional/ mental violence, social violence and/or physical violence. One of the most painful experiences of social exclusion was shared by Rita (transwoman):

> There was an English teacher of mine who used to continuously poke me [saying]: "why do you walk like girls" and she would "teach" me to walk like boys, to walk with my shoulders arched etc. After a certain point, she declared that Rita has some mental illness and asked everyone to boycott [ignore]me. So, I was boycotted for one month in my class.

Similarly, Maahika, a transsexual, shared how attempts were made to indoctrinate behavioural changes by her teachers: "In school, teachers, too, used to reprimand me on my way of walking, my posture or why I met members from the trans* community. They would call my parents and tell them to correct my ways as it doesn't seem 'appropriate' in the school. My parents would feel very embarrassed and beat me up. The teachers sometimes would laugh behind my back and male teachers would teach me how to walk like a 'man'."

These changes that the teachers are trying to bring in the students point to the traditional gender binary as well as gender roles and appearances assigned to the binarized sexes and genders where certain sex and gender popularly associated with them, are presumed to be behaving in a certain assigned gender-specific way. These gender binaries are perpetuated by the teachers, owing to their lack of knowledge and/or biases, and there is no space for course correction in schools as there aren't any gender-sensitive training sessions for teachers. Also, there is no legal recourse for a trans* student to turn to in case their rights aren't protected by institutions.

**3.2.2 Friends and Peers**

Being a part of and raised in a cis-gendered, homophobic, and heteronormative society, children do not necessarily understand what it means or who is trans* or gender non-conforming. It is very likely that children at a young age barely understand what gender is and how it can be different from sex-assigned-at-birth. Owing to this lack of knowledge, the binary heteronormative gender regime encourages people to actively reject and ostracise those who don't conform. It's a reflection of social values and norms that have been conditioned in cisgender children at home and school.

All the participants shared having experienced some form of bullying, harassment and/or violence at their school from their peers or friends. These instances were related to the gender expression of the participants, which seemed to be not in line with the gender that was assigned to them at birth. For instance, Shanti, a transwoman, shared that it was difficult for her to make friends during school as the students were constantly making fun of her gestures and mannerisms. And due to the continuous bullying and ragging in university, she left her doctoral studies.

Name-calling was something that almost every respondent reported having faced. Teerthana mentioned: "Some friends, they used to call me "*chakka", "meetha", "hijra*"(slang words for trans* people in Hindi) and everything, and things like "you're a sin on manhood."

Having faced discrimination and bullying at the hands of both the teachers, who are supposed to be an alternate parent figure or *guru* (master) in the Indian context, and friends and peers, who are strong influencing factors, especially by virtue of the fact that they are all nearly of the same age, trans* children are not able to make sense of the discriminatory behaviour and harassment and often are not able to complain to anyone about it. This, in turn, implies that the discrimination against trans* children is considered okay and even justified, and passes as something that they invited upon themselves, owing to their non-conforming behaviour.

### 3.2.3. One Size Does NOT Fit All: Uniforms and Infrastructure

Uniforms in school play an important role in constructing the gender regime in the school. Uniforms or dress codes not only establish different dress codes for different genders but also restrict students from exploring other clothing, reinforcing gender roles through clothes. In Indian schools, it is mandatory to have uniforms and the uniforms are based on gender. Boys usually are supposed to wear a trouser and a shirt and girls are given a skirt and a shirt or *salwar kameez* (female garment). The uniform design might vary from school to school, but each school would have gender-assigned uniforms. Even the shoes would be different: sports shoes for boys and pumps for girls.

The responses from the participants helped me to see how stark discrimination and othering happen in and through these uniforms. This view has been shared by several participants:

Rita (transwoman), in an elaborate conversation, shared how schools put us into "pink and blue boxes":

I suffered a lot and had very bad memories of my childhood, and because of that, today, when people talk about their school life, I don't have any good memories of my school life because I was never ever comfortable in my school. Today we talk about consent, but there was no concept of consent in schools. Can you choose your uniform? I was never comfortable in collared shirts and trousers, [I] would always wish to wear skirts but was too scared of the consequences. Every morning I would wear my uniform, I didn't feel [like] myself, I felt suffocated, but I had no choice. In SUPW classes, girls are taught knitting, and boys are taught how to make electric boats. Where is my choice? Where did I get the opportunity to make decisions for

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myself? I was never given, and no other child is given. School is the place where we are packed into blue and pink boxes.

Clearly, school uniforms are not as "uniform" for all students: for some, it just ends up solidifying the very boxes that it promises to break. This constricts gender non-conforming people to the gender binaries each day and their expressions. Sadly, almost all of the participants reported that they had no other option but to abide by whatever uniform was available and forced onto them, so as to be able to attend schooling. However, Vir, a transman, shared a different experience: "I talked to the principal about my situation and thereafter, wore boys' uniform. And when I went to pursue my B.A, I told my situation to the staff and told them that I can't wear "feminine" clothes. They did not have any problem with my request."

Vir's experience tells us how the "uniformity" of gender affects different trans* people differently. Whereas several transwomen found the uniform to be restrictive yet had no way to get the authorities to permit them to wear "girls" uniforms. The uniform experience was not that much of an issue for the transman, and he could get the authorities' permission to wear "boys'" uniform. One reason for this disparity of experience with regard to uniforms could be that, in the patriarchal society we live in, the male is considered the standard, and it is considered okay (to some extent, if not completely) if a biologically female person wears "boys" clothes; while on the other hand, a biologically male wearing "girls" clothes is considered unacceptable, which is because women are given an inferior position in the patriarchal society.

Another issue that many trans* students face is the lack of trans*-friendly washrooms. Schools and most other institutions have only male and female washrooms, with an occasional "accessible" or "disabled-friendly" washroom. This lack of trans*-friendly washrooms posed the perennial dilemma for trans* students as to which washroom to use. Maahika (transsexual)

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shared her experience that encapsulates the struggle very starkly: "All my school life, I never ate or drank anything, so that I wouldn't have to use the washroom." Ankit (transman) also had a similar experience of using the washroom:

> After using the male washroom, of course I was met with some glares and stares, so I understood that that is not where I can go. And the only other place that was left was the female washroom. After a long time, I was conditioned, and without any word, I would go to the female washroom. So, yeah, even in my college, we do not have gender-neutral washrooms.

Ankit's and Maahika's experience is a typical example of the constant washroom dilemma that a trans* student must go through. "In the absence of legal protection, transgender persons may be forced to use bathrooms of their sex assigned at birth. Transgender persons are often subjected to taunts, harassment, and fear violence while accessing public restrooms" (Sriraam 124). The constant struggle for basic amenities is the everyday reality of trans* people. Each of the participants shared their struggle with the washroom and how it impacted their school experiences. The present model of the Indian education system doesn't have space for inclusive infrastructure. Many schools don't have any washrooms, so having gender-neutral or trans*-specific washrooms is a long journey ahead.

The existing barriers in schools are strengthened by the male-female binary, be it through different uniforms for male and female students, or washrooms for the two sexes which essentially leaves out and overlooks the needs of "third" gender students. Uniforms, textbooks, languages, jokes, among other things perpetuate heterosexuality as the only norm and propagate the message that discriminatory behavior towards trans* students is justified in order to "correct" their "deviance"/"abnormalcy" (Saha).

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The Indian government has come up with National Education Policy in 2020 that mentions making school spaces more inclusive but doesn't have a clear roadmap for the same. In May 2023, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) issued a new manual recommending making gender-neutral uniforms, a trans* inclusive curriculum and safe washroom facilities "to integrate the third gender in the formal schooling process", according to a newspaper article (The Telegraph). This is a draft manual and is yet to be finalized and approved by the government. Since the recognition of trans* as the third gender in 2014, no step has been taken to make school spaces inclusive for trans* people. As India has a right-wing party in power, there are rare chances that the recommendation would be approved as they have openly opposed homosexuality and same-sex marriage so it is unlikely that they will approve an inclusive curriculum. And even if the government approves the recommendations, the implementation becomes a huge hindrance as it has been with the Right to Education Act, 2009. While elementary education is recognized by the Right to Education Act poverty in India deprives many children of basic education, who instead engage in various forms of child labour.

Many of the participants reported a lack of access to schooling and education during their childhood, mainly because of poverty. However, for many participants, relentless taunting, harassment, and ridicule, directed at their gender nonconformity, interrupts their education and thus impacts their livelihood opportunities. As Shanti (transsexual) mentioned, she was teased and bullied in schools because of which she left her doctoral studies for which she had worked hard. As she dropped out of her doctoral studies, she didn't have a job for two years.

The dropout rates of trans* students from schools leave them with fewer livelihood options. Sometimes, due to leaving their homes at an early age, they don't have proper documentation which makes it even more difficult for them to apply for jobs. The discriminatory

practices at school also leave an impact on their mental health which they continue to struggle with in their later lives and at workplaces, as we will see in the next chapter.

**Conclusion**

Discrimination becomes part and parcel of a trans* person's life right from childhood. The prejudice of the phobia towards trans* people is so deep that they can't access basic rights that come to every person by virtue of being a citizen of the country. "The transgender stigma becomes the cause of all discriminations as they are branded into a category, which leads to being away from access to opportunities and justice" (Mishra 21). Due to their non-conforming gender identity and stigmas attached to trans* identity, they become victims of structural discrimination and thus excluded from basic rights and opportunities.

Discrimination from familial settings causes more trauma and creates heightened vulnerability. The interviews showed that trans* individuals are subjected to various levels of discrimination and violence by their families, peers, schools, and communities. They are caught in a spiral of exclusion and marginalization from their formative years and sometimes this marginalization is compounded due to the intersectional positionality of the trans* individual. Almost all the participants said that they felt neglected, discriminated against, and excluded by their surroundings. And some even struggled to meet their basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. Some even had to leave their home early as their families either abandoned them or they couldn't live with their families due to their lack of understanding and empathy about their gender identity.

While all of the participants of the study underwent systematic othering and exclusion in one or more domains, it was observed that different people were affected in different amounts and different ways, depending on their gender identity within the trans* spectrum, the caste and

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class positionality, the support (or its lack, thereof) from family, friends, peers, partner etc, as well as the geographical location and socio-cultural contexts they belonged to. Maahika, (transsexual) who belonged to a lower caste and class stated the discrimination she faced at school due to her intersectional positionality (Crenshaw). She shared how she wasn't allowed to touch the water taps and was asked to sit separately from other students. Trans* people experience discrimination in multiple ways and "the contradiction arises from our assumptions that their claims of exclusion must be unidirectional. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another" (Crenshaw 150).

Belonging to one or more disadvantaged identities adds layers of marginalization, and thus heightens the discrimination and exclusion that trans* people face. Maahika's (transsexual) experience highlights the intersectional nature of discrimination and exclusion in educational spaces, where the intersections of her identities, as a person from a lower caste and class, as well as trans*, results in her facing greater discrimination in her school. The discrimination at school leads to many trans* children dropping out of school at an early age which creates barriers in accessing livelihood opportunities later in life. The barriers are much more rigid if the trans* individual's gender identity overlaps with their other marginalized social identities like caste, class, region, level of education and even the gender assigned to them at birth.

The denial of, or the withheld access to material and financial resources certainly had to do with the financial condition of the family, but also was because of the person's gender identity at birth. In the face of lack of or scarcity of financial or material resources in the family, the girl child, who is the marginalized entity, has her share of resources curtailed, and treated as an unimportant person which is often the case in India because of the prevalent patriarchal system (Crenshaw).

Similarly, trans* person or trans* child has to undergo a denial of resources in case of scarcity of resources in the household, because of their constructed inferior positionality due to their gender identity. For instance, transmen are a highly invisiblized population in India. Scholarships available on trans* people discuss extensively transwomen or *hijras*, leaving out transmen. Through the interviews with transmen, it was realized that they are most marginalised within all the trans* identities. Lack of opportunities growing up due to the preference for male children, restriction of mobility, and constant fear of their bodies being violated if they work in a male-dominated space impact their livelihood situation. "Being born female, leaving their biological families, and forming groups akin to the groups formed by *hijras* have been relatively difficult for transmen. Hence, they have remained invisible" (Purayil 184). Their social invisibility flows into the law where they are mentioned only twice in the policy document and the policies and programs are designed mainly for transwomen or *hijras*.

Trans* people's experiences in their formative years are filled with abuse, discrimination, and exclusion, influenced identity formation, along with their choice of occupation later in life. Lack of familial support and lack of education during early years hugely impacts their access to opportunities, which I will discuss in detail in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: THE STRUGGLES IN THE SPHERE OF WORK

I have found so far that the lived realities and life experiences during growing up years, as well as the intersectional positionality of trans* people, are extremely pertinent in determining the livelihood opportunities which they could, or structurally were allowed to engage in. In the previous chapter, I spoke about the barriers trans* people face in various spaces which impact their livelihood situation later on in life. Lack of acceptance from parents, non-inclusivity in school, and discrimination by society, all lead to challenges later in finding a "dignified" job in the mainstream labour market. The exclusion and discrimination faced at an early stage create barriers when accessing jobs. 7 out of 13 of my interviewees reported having challenges in gaining employment due to lack of education. And everyone agreed that most trans* people don't receive support from their families or societies which creates a huge challenge for them in getting into mainstream employment.

The systematic exclusion othering and denial of opportunities and rights in the formative years contribute to keeping trans* individuals far off from mainstream livelihood opportunities. It also limits or restricts them to certain jobs, which they may or may not like, but often find themselves continuing in for various reasons, primarily to make ends meet financially. Even when they make it to mainstream livelihoods and occupations, their experiences are marked with social exclusion, denial of opportunities and rights in the workspace as well as barriers to further growth, both, personal and professional.

One of the major motivations and reasons for this study was to understand the challenges that trans* people go through to make it to livelihoods that are considered "unusual" for trans* people. Growing up in India as a cisgender woman, I have time and again heard many stereotypes and prejudices against trans* people, relating to their personal life and their work. Of the

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stereotypes about trans* people I've heard, what felt the most disturbing was the sweeping generalization that trans* people are engaged only in sex work and begging. Through this thesis, I want to explore and throw light on the diversity of occupations that trans* people are engaged in. Their engagement in these wide varieties of occupations is not to say that they made it there easily or are surviving there smoothly.

In this chapter, we will see the challenges trans* people face in the labour market in accessing jobs and the difficulties they face at the workplace. I will also explore the loopholes in laws, policies, and programs by the government, and how they impact the livelihood opportunities for trans* people.

## 4.1 Barriers to Entry into "Dignified" Jobs

Trans* people are struggling to find themselves in mainstream jobs due to stereotypes related to them and the lack of opportunities provided to them. Many don't find opportunities and thus go for sex-work and begging and others struggle to find their way into mainstream jobs. The lack of opportunities and acceptance during the formative years of their lives hugely impacts their livelihood opportunities as I pointed out in the last chapter.

For many of the participants, the lack of access to basic needs has impacted their adult life, both emotionally and financially. Due to the lack of familial support growing up, they continue to struggle for their basic survival and emotional support which in turn impacts their current livelihood situation. And for many of trans* people, earning a living isn't always about income but also about getting the familial and social acceptance that they have been devoid of growing up. Many participants mentioned the motivation for a "dignified" job comes from their childhood experiences, the lack of acceptance from their families, and the lack of financial support. Also, having a decent-paying job helps them counter the stigma associated with the

stereotype that trans* people are only capable of begging and doing sex work. They see livelihood as a way to cope with their childhood experiences, from the feelings of vulnerability and fear, seeking acceptance and support that they didn't receive growing up.

The structural discrimination and exclusion trans* people have to face growing up leads to the narrowing down of livelihood opportunities. And even though the participants happen to be in mainstream jobs, if not well-paying jobs, often they expressed that their actual career aspiration was something else altogether, which remained unfulfilled due to societal structural barriers that prevent trans* people's entry into certain livelihoods.

Vir (transman), who has recently completed his B.A. in Law and is looking for a job, was unfortunately very sure that he couldn't go for his childhood dream profession, that is, to become a civil servant. He said, "Since childhood, I wanted to try for civil services. But it is very tough for a trans* person. I am recently facing issues with my documents. Apart from that, the government too is not supportive. Then I wondered, here I am working so hard, but they might not give us anything. They look at a trans* person and point out some flaw or deficit or the other. They wouldn't at all hire me."

Due to the complicated documentation process for gender identity change, many trans* people find it difficult to find a decent job without proper documentation. Also, it is important to note that trans* people are also apprehensive about going into mainstream jobs as they feel that they will not be accepted. Vir's narrative is an example of how the experiences of living in a transphobic cisgender society result in trauma and long-term self-esteem issues for trans* people, which negatively affect their career choices. The experiences of exclusion and discrimination stay with them and create fear of reliving those experiences if they get into mainstream jobs. Lack of

inclusivity in the social and economic space makes trans* people feel unwelcome in pursuing their dreams. Their gender identity comes in the way of their aspiration.

The aspirations of the trans* people are also thwarted by their parents or disapproval from society about their gender identity. Many participants shared that they aspired to go into creative professions but due to the pressure of their parents, they could never choose their dream jobs. For example, Shanti (transwoman) recalled that as a child she wanted to be a dancer, but her parents were completely averse to this idea and forced her to do engineering. Because Shanti didn't like engineering, it took her almost 7 years to complete her education. She had to take two years off after her education to cope with the "corrective" medical treatments her parents had forced on her which, in turn, impacted her employment opportunities. This shows how trans* people have to compromise their dreams, their aspirations because of pressure from parents and also associating gender identity with professions creates a barrier to exploring various occupations. The shame attached to choosing certain professions by trans* people is looked down upon and thus discouraged.

Also, the financial responsibilities of a male-assigned child are more than a female-assigned child in India, they are held responsible for providing for their parents and siblings, so they have to succumb to the pressure of their parents and take up a job that is accepted by the society and pays more. Shanti eventually worked as an engineer and took up modelling projects as a freelancer without anyone's knowledge. Her dream to be a dancer remains unfulfilled. Discrimination against trans* people become a huge barrier to trans* people accessing job opportunities. Despite the Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act 2019 which prohibits discrimination in employment, many employers don't give jobs to trans* people due to their own biases. As mentioned before, 96% of trans* people said that they were denied jobs due to their

gender identity (UNDP). Kavita (transwoman)who works at a salon, recalls her childhood dream of being an air hostess. She shared:

> I was passionate since my childhood to work in aircraft. At that time, I didn't know that the job was called a 'cabin crew' job. We used to say air hostesses. From different countries, I saw different transwomen working as cabin crew. But, in India, you barely see transwomen working as cabin crew members. Most of my friends [transwomen] are cabin crew, in different countries. One day I went to Indigo Airlines interview. The first round I cleared. But, when I told them that I am a transgender, they said they are sorry and cannot hire me, as they didn't have "opportunity for trans* people". Another reason she gave was that Indigo Airlines represents 'girls' power' and they have only women cabin crew. I really wanted to make it to their…not really because of the salary, but more because of my dream.

Kavita couldn't fulfil her childhood dream because of her trans* identity. Indigo Airlines is a big company in India and if big companies deny jobs to trans* people based on their gender identity, then one can imagine the situation in small companies where they might lack resources to set up an inclusive environment. This reflects the looming stereotypes against trans* people and the systematic denial of jobs and opportunities. Interestingly, the Airlines crew member's response when she said that they take only "women" gives a hint of the cisgender view of who all can qualify as a "woman", wherein, a transwoman, even though she might be medically and socially transitioned, does not pass as a "woman", and continues to be an outsider.

Trans* people are systematically excluded from the labour market. The discrimination faced during the initial years creates a huge impact on their self-esteem, confidence, and access to opportunities. Childhood traumas, experiences of inequality and marginalization create a deep

sense of exclusion which trans* people internalize which later affects their livelihood options and opportunities. Further into the labour market, they are continuously denied access to equal opportunities due to practical issues of lack of education, resources, and proper documentation to avail government schemes and the prevalent biases and stigmas against trans* people.

## 4.2 Discrimination, Stigma & Non-inclusivity at Workplace

The trans* identity supersedes trans* people's skills, talent and qualifications and leads to discrimination and humiliation. Even if trans* people gain employment, discrimination in the workplace often makes it impossible for them to continue their job. All 13 interviewees shared discrimination and stigmas they had to face at the workplace at some level. Indian law recognizes the right to work and thus has reservations of seats for employment for many minority groups in India, but trans* people are not included. On the one hand, the law provides the right 'to' work which includes the right to get a fair opportunity to work, on the other hand, the rights 'at' work have rights of workers during employment at any workplace, be it concerning wages, conditions of service, discriminations concerning terms of employment or workings hours, etc.

However, there is no clear legal recourse for trans* people when it comes to discrimination at the workplace. "There is no penalty prescribed against the person who discriminates against a trans* person. It doesn't talk about compensation as a relief against discrimination" (Jaddidi and Sharma 16). The lack of legal recourse makes it difficult for trans* people to report cases of discrimination. The denial of rights at the workplace is invisible to lawmakers and employers which leads to many trans* people leaving their jobs.

The biggest amount of discrimination was faced by trans* people working in informal sectors where they are not regulated or protected by the state. The Transgender Protection of Rights Act, 2019 states there should be no discrimination against trans* people at the workplace,

however, the Act covers establishments "consisting of one hundred or more persons", leaving out many small and unregulated informal sectors where most trans* people are employed, be it salons, small factories or in domestic work. The daily discrimination faced by them at the workplace, be it through unequal pay, harassment, or denial of equal opportunities, remains invisible as workplaces, where such discrimination takes place, are not even considered workplaces under the Indian law. Trans* people working in the informal sector have to go through discrimination on a daily basis without any space for redressal.

Kavita (transwoman) shared her experience of working at a salon:

> A customer had come for a bikini wax. I had been doing bikini wax for customers before also. It was to the manager to tell the customers my gender identity…not everyone would be comfortable with transgender people. From my side, I informed the manager of everything about my gender identity the day I joined. So, it was on her to inform the customer. She did not inform her. And when she (customer) came, she recognized my gender identity, and asked for the manager. The manager came and started shouting at me. It clearly was not my mistake. Before hiring me, I told you everything, then, why are you hiding from the customer?

Kavita's acknowledgement that not everyone would be comfortable with trans* people giving them service might reflect her own internalization of the stigma around her and other trans* persons' identities, and how subtle and covert transphobia is normalized. From Kavita's experience, what one can infer is that the absence of tangible violence and discrimination doesn't negate the presence and the magnitude of transphobia that trans* people have to go through on a daily basis.

There is also a pay gap that exists between cisgender and trans* people. 7 out of 13 trans* interviewees said that they were being paid less as compared to cisgender in the same role because of their gender identity. They face multiple levels of discrimination in the workplace and work hard to survive. Maahika (transwoman) shared her experience:

> I never asked for advance money, but I had met with an accident so needed money for my surgery but they [employer] didn't give me. But I have seen that whenever other girls want advance money, they always give it to them. They also used to send my incentive one month late…and you know, one time, they didn't pay my salary for two months, despite me achieving two-three times my target. Sometimes they used to call me on [the]weekend. But when I will go, they gave me only 50 rupees, per day…while the salary is 500 rupees one day. Over time, they gave me just 15 rupees [for] one hour. I think it was because I am a transwoman. It's not fair!

The above experiences that Maahika faced highlight the multiple levels of exploitation many trans* people have to go through. The wage gap, and verbal and physical harassment at workplace have been indicated by many interviewees. Even though discrimination also exists against women in general, the situation is relatively less discriminatory and complicated for cis women in certain regards as compared to trans* women. Kavita shared that most of her cis women colleagues lived with their families, so they have financial, emotional, and social security. They could fall back on their families for support. They were also paid more than transwomen and would have privileges that they wouldn't have like family welfare schemes provided by employers as many might be abandoned by their families and many homosexual trans* people wouldn't have families due to the denial of same-sex marriage by law. This highlights how trans* people are doubly marginalized in greater degrees and levels, owing to their intersectional

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positionalities of being a trans* person in a country with multiple levels of hierarchies where they fall on the bottom because of their gender identity intermixed with other marginalities such as lack of resources and support from families and in many cases, by their sexuality also if it doesn't fall under the heterosexual category.

When a workplace doesn't provide an inclusive environment to a trans* person this leads to either the trans* person leaving the job or continuing in a toxic space. "Sometimes due to the stress caused by the limitations in opportunity due to their gender-nonconforming identity, third-gender people may attempt to hide their identity in employment settings, thereby also running the risk of being discovered by their coworkers and being subsequently fired by their employers" (Azhar and Vaudrey 148).

A safe and inclusive space needs to be created for trans* people for them to flourish in the workspace. Not just the informal sector but the formal sector has a scarcity of facilities or inclusive environments for trans* people. They are more rigid than the informal sector and leave no space for trans* people to exist with their identities. Kiranraj (transman) left his government school teaching job after 15 years of working there. He said, "I worked in a government teacher job for 15 years, but I hated every day of going to school dressed in a *salwar kurta* or *saree* [female garments]. I didn't like when people would call me "madam" or when I had to use the female washroom, it was all very uncomfortable. I could not share with anyone what I was going through, which led to depression for many years. So, I left the job, and you know how hard it is to get a government job, but I just could not work there anymore."

Kiraraj's experience tells us how the rigid enforcement of gender binaries of men and women is in the formal sector and how non-inclusive the workspaces are. He tells me how he had issues with using the female washroom and female staffroom, everything around him made him

uncomfortable to the point that he left a stable job. Basic facilities are denied from childhood to adulthood, from school space to workplace.

Every interviewee reported experiencing some kind of bullying and harassment at the workplace from name-calling and stalking to physical and sexual abuse. One of the interviewees narrated several instances of being sexually abused by her colleagues and employers. She said that the discrimination and harassment also come from their own prejudices against transwomen "They think that all transwomen are involved in sex work." "Regardless of their employment, they are often assumed to be sex workers and are told that rape should be expected for their social position" (Azhar and Vaudrey 148). And when they report to the police, their complaints aren't registered often by the police, thus trans* people end up feeling unheard and ignored by the law. Their experiences of abuse are questioned due to the stigmas attached to trans* people that they must be involved in prostitution and thus any experience of abuse or violence is seen as acceptable.

These instances aren't a rarity as many interviewees told me about their trans* friends who constantly face severe levels of discrimination and exclusion due to stigmas attached to trans* people. With the exclusion of trans* people from the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act (POSH) and the exclusion of the informal sector under the 2019 Act for trans* people, there seems to be no space for justice for trans* people against the constant humiliation and discrimination they face at the workplace. Many trans* people find themselves in non-inclusive and abusive spaces in the employment sector which discourages them from getting into mainstream jobs and even when they do, they leave the job due to constant harassment and discrimination. Stigmas caused by gender identity led to social, cultural, economic, and political exclusion and thus limited job opportunities for trans* people.

## 4.3 Transgender Protection of Rights Act, 2019: Inclusion or Pacification through Tokenism?

The Expert Committee Report on Transgender by the Ministry of social justice and empowerment, India defined trans* people as "All persons whose own sense of gender does not match with the gender assigned to them at birth. These include transmen, transwomen, gender queers, intersex people, and other sociocultural identities like *kinnars, hijras, aravanis, jogtas*, etc" (26).

A year after the decriminalization of homosexuality, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill was passed in 2019. The Act addresses the constitutional rights of trans* people and non-discriminatory laws across different institutions like family, workplace, health services etc. Clause 14 of Chapter VI of the Act states that:

> The appropriate Government shall formulate welfare schemes and programs to facilitate and support livelihood for transgender persons including their vocational training and self-employment.

Sahiba, (*hijra* transwoman) explained that "The 2016 draft of the Bill compromised and threatened to damage our community's rituals. Now, the Act which has come after redrafting, has been made after having dialogue with the community and is quite good. The government is working gradually. Like I said, effort should be put in constantly, so that there is change in the society."

Sahiba's view stems from the fact that the Transgender Act provides clear provisions for the *hijra* community and some of the prominent *hijra* community members were called for a dialogue while framing of the Act. An activist working with the government for the livelihood programs for trans* people described the 2019 Act as "more progressive one than the 2016 one." They went on to explain that "As an activist, this Act gives us space to negotiate with the

government to include other diverse sexualities, to create more livelihood spaces for trans*
individuals."

However, the law comes with a lot of challenges and was thus opposed by many trans*
people when the Act was passed. A newspaper article describes the Act as full of "apathy,
neglect, and secrecy. A series of betrayal of assurances and a convolution of a law that would do
nothing for the trans community and would rather snatch away the bare minimum that existed"
(Feminism In India). Trans* people especially the non-*hijras* trans* people have called this Act
archaic and unconstitutional. There are several gaps in the Transgender Persons (Protection of
Rights) Act that makes us question the inclusiveness and understanding of the Indian legal
system when it comes to trans* people. In the section below, I will discuss some of these gaps
and how they impact the livelihood situation of trans* people.

### 4.3.1 Lack of Inclusivity and Representation in Definition and Livelihood Programs: Transgender Protection of Rights, Act 2019

The term transgender as described by the Act is limited and regressive as it puts all the
gender identities into three categories, i.e., man, woman, and transgender, without understanding
the nuances of different genders. The term 'transgender person' is too broad to include people
with intersex variations. Not just the term but the provisions under this act, majorly focus on
transwomen and eunuch without providing much space for transmen, genderqueer or intersex
people. Though the Act provides recognition to regional identities like *Hijras, Aravanis, Shiv
Shaktis, Jogappas* and others, "It only mentions transmen and other masculine identities only
twice in the 150-page ruling. The Act produces a monolithic identity called 'Transgender' who is
a *hijra* by default" (Bhattacharya 10). Thus, the schemes and programs for the employment of

trans\* people don't work, especially for non-*hijra* trans\* people or non-transwomen, as the premises are based on a narrow understanding of trans\* people as *hijras* or transwomen.

Unlike *hijras*, who got a certain level of representation and were consulted while making the Act, other queer and trans\* identities' representation and consultation weren't sought equally. Many trans\* rights activists have expressed that other trans\* identities have just been hastily lumped under the trans\* umbrella, without their unique issues adequately addressed (Banerjee). Ankit, a transman, explained how he didn't feel represented by the law: "The law, schemes, programmes, everything is made [having] kept in mind *hijra* people or at the max, transwoman, but what about us? And it's not just about the law, people's understanding of transgender people is only limited to *hijras.* It's difficult for a transman to find their space. It's sad but what can you do."

Non-*hijra* trans\* people feel excluded from the Act which has led them to have an overwhelming sense of injustice. Crenshaw explains that "identity politics" fails to recognize the intragroup differences leading to tension among groups (Crenshaw 1242). The State's erases the differences amongst different trans\* identities, and their experiences, leading to flawed policies and conflict within the trans\* community.

There are different amounts of representation from different trans\* identities: some trans\* people were able to make their voices heard and concerns addressed in a greater proportion, while some others continue to be left out, and exist on the fringes, marginalized even within the marginalized group. That is true for many trans\* people who fall into different categories of trans\* who don't feel represented enough in the legal policies or programs. A failure to have inclusive representation of trans\* people on the policy-making board could mean that the laws or

policies will only cater to a certain category of trans* identity and leave out the other, impacting their livelihood opportunities.

Due to the lack of representation and inclusivity of all trans* identities, the programs designed by the government have not been able to make a significant impact in providing employment to trans* people. Until 2019, there was no exclusive skills training course for trans* people. It was only recently that some states have started the skills training programs for trans* people, however, they are mainly designed for transwomen wherein they are taught the traditional skills ascribed to women like sewing, beauty salons, customer management, etc, leaving out any scope for other trans* identities, thus reinforcing traditional female roles and feminizing certain professions that don't pay as well as masculinized ones. Moreover, these skills training programs are only available in four states, all in the southern states of India.

There is also a huge gap between the programs and their implementation. Lack of funds is one of the major issues in the implementation of the programs. Ministry's Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood & Enterprise (SMILE) scheme, where they provide skill development training and rehabilitation, aiming to help marginalized groups in gaining "dignified" employment. According to the website of the ministry, a certain amount will be allocated to each shelter home every year, however, news media has reported that many of them have not received any funds in 2022.

One of the program managers at one of the shelter homes in Delhi reported to the news media, "We have not received any funds from the government for nearly 11 months. We have been managing by taking loans" (The Quint). Similarly, many other employees of shelter homes have claimed the same: "The children who are in Garima Grehs (shelter homes) have either run away from their homes or have been made to leave. They can't go back. If proper shelter and

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training is not provided to them, they will leave and become vulnerable to begging, violence, and sex work", says Maya Awasthy, the Project Director of Shelter Home in Mumbai (The Quint). Shuvajit, a trans* activist, who has been working with the central government to improve the livelihoods of trans* people, said that the government is reluctant to provide funds for trans* people as it is still not a priority for them.

Prime Minister Narender Modi at the G7 summit in May 2023 stated that Indian laws ensure the rights of trans* people, however many news reports and interviews with people working at these shelter homes suggest that the government isn't concerned about trans* people. Non-functional shelter homes where skills training is also provided to trans* people would lead to more unemployment of trans* people as they are not provided with basic facilities by the government. The Indian government might have put the laws in place but there is still a lot of reluctance to provide the required support to trans* people to implement the laws.

Even the skilling program isn't a holistic intervention at these shelter homes. Shuvajit, a trans* activist told me: "Shelter homes (inclusive of skill training programs) have been made by the government for trans* people wherein they get shelter, food, and training on livelihood skills. However, there are problems with it. One, they are given training only for low-paying jobs and sometimes they get jobs that don't match their skills or personality and they have to soon leave the job. Second, there are no follow-ups after they are being placed so the loop doesn't get closed." These are important factors in explaining why many trans* people opt out of the skills training programs by the government. In fact, it leaves them more frustrated. Shuvajit further explained that he knows only transwomen who have been part of these skill training programs and many of them left the jobs after the training program as they didn't match their personalities, or they were bullied by the employer.

In addition, even though the government has a few programs for the employment of trans* people, they don't understand or care about the implications of the intersectional positionality of trans* people in society when designing programs or providing employment opportunities. For example, the Kerala government (a southern state) provided jobs to 15 trans* people and within a month all of them had left the job as they could not find accommodation anywhere, none of the house owners wanted to rent to trans* people. "Transgender persons often face discrimination in accessing house for accommodations which includes discrimination in the rental market, high rents, refusal of housing facilities, even if they get house they are subjected to harassments from landlords, neighbours" (Jaddidi and Sharma 2758). 7 out of 13 of my interviewees are either staying with their trans* friends or with their parents due to lack of rent options.

Shuvajit also pointed out that one can't uproot trans* people from their communities to enter corporate or government jobs. When the integration of trans* people into mainstream jobs is enforced without understanding the intersectional positionality, it becomes a problem. One needs to understand that trans* people are trying to understand the mainstream employment system like the mainstream is trying to understand them, their needs, and their identities. They are trying to pave their way into mainstream employment with all the past experiences of exclusion and discrimination. However, the government can't create inclusive, holistic and sustainable livelihood programs for trans* people which shows a lack of understanding of the government when it comes to the needs and background of trans* people.

### 4.3.2. Mismatch of Information on Identity Cards

All the schemes and programs discussed above can't be accessed without a certificate or ID as proof of being a trans* person. However, to receive a trans* certificate one must go through

a tedious process. The 2019 Act gives trans* people a "right to self-perceived identity" but requires them to register with the government if they want to be officially recognized as "transgender." Irrespective of the gender affirmation surgery, every trans* person has to submit a certificate of gender change to get their gender identity changed in legal documents. Although the screening committee has been removed, trans* persons still need a certificate from a government doctor and the district magistrate. This goes against the right to choose one's own gender; now they have to go through doctors and magistrates to prove their sexuality. "This is not just unfortunate but also regressive. Rights, by their very nature, are inherent. Only privileges are conferred" (Sriraam 121). According to the Constitution of India, one's recognition of gender identity can't be dependent on a certificate.

Shuvajit further explained:

> The Act gives the right to the doctor and magistrate to determine the "correctness" of the application. The legal identity of a trans* person gets hugely affected if the doctor or magistrate doesn't get convinced that they are trans*. This goes against the very objective of the legislature which wanted to provide autonomy and rights to trans* people. The process of certification goes against the principle of "self-determination". The Act also doesn't state what happens if the gender change application is rejected.

The more problematic provision in the Act is that a trans* person will be identified as male or female only if they undergo the gender affirmation surgery. This is a violation of the integrity and rights of trans* people. An "intrusive" and "invasive" medical procedure can't be a prerequisite of making simple changes in the document (Sriraam 122).

The Act has also made the District Magistrate custodian of the right to provide identity certificates to trans* people. However, the process allows for institutional marginalization due to the gaps within the government system. "There is a process of gatekeeping that does not allow passing trans* people to participate or benefit from the schemes meant for trans* people" (Nair 10). Trans* people face issues with the government administration to access ID cards as in many cases there is a delay or denial of an ID card as the administration is ignorant of Transgender Act itself. Shuvajit who has worked with the state government on the implementation of the Transgender 2019 Act says that many district magistrates aren't even aware of the process. He says, "Anytime a trans* person would go the D.M's office, they wouldn't know about the certificate for trans* people. The P.A will say 'Nothing happens here.' Most of them have no clue about the policy. The online portal for trans* certificate is good but most of the trans* people are unable access it due to illiteracy and poverty. Only 17 trans* certificates were issued in a state with a population of 30 million." This creates a huge gap between the designing of the policy and the implementation of it on the ground.

Many interviewees also found the process to be confusing and tedious. The discrepancy between their birth certificate and official documents after sex reassignment surgery poses a problem for trans* people while looking for suitable employment (UNDP). The delay in getting the certificate may also discourage trans* people from looking for jobs and without proper documentation, they can't apply for jobs and thus choose to go for informal, low-paying jobs where documentation isn't required.  Shanti (transsexual) said, "It takes at least six months or more to get the documents corrected. The process is so confusing that multiple visits are needed to get the certificate. Most trans* people don't have the resources or sometimes the literacy to understand the process, so they just give up."

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Due to a mismatch of information on identity cards, trans* people are also not able to access livelihood opportunities or even social welfare schemes which further pushes them towards the margins. The 2019 Act does provide legal recognition to trans* people which wasn't available before. However, according to a Right to Information report, only 19,000 trans* people across the country have been issued identity cards recognizing them as trans* (Deccan Herald). 19,000 is a small number compared to the estimated half a million population of trans* people in India. Without proper documents, no schemes or formal livelihood opportunities could be accessed which leads to trans* people going to *hijra* community for a more sustainable livelihood model or for low-paying jobs in the informal sector.

**Conclusion**

Like any other child, trans* children have dreams of what they want to be when they grow up but owing to their marginalized and othered gender identity and their experiences of exclusion and discrimination during formative years, their dreams or even their practical choices to be part of mainstream livelihood often remain unfulfilled. Trans* people's inability to enter these professions and sectors speaks less about their incapability and more about the blatant transphobia and the resulting structural barriers they face from childhood to adulthood, within homes, institutions, and workplaces, which continually hinder trans* people's entry into them.

Lack of inspirational representation also restricts trans* people from exploring different livelihood options. Having grown up only seeing trans* people from *hijra* communities begging and doing sex-work, the idea of a full-time job is difficult to imagine for many trans* people. Also, many join the *hijra* community as they see it as a space where they will be accepted for their identity, it gives them a sense of recognition, and visibility that they lack in a cis-normative

gender-binarized society. "When a trans* adult thrives, a trans* child survives", said Rita (transwoman).

Inclusive representation of trans* people in mainstream livelihoods is extremely important to create avenues for other trans* people. When we rarely see any trans* person thriving, it becomes difficult for others to step out and create a space for themselves. This lack of trans* people in mainstream jobs has also been one prominent reason for flawed policies and law that fails to address some of the actual and on-ground concerns and challenges faced by trans* people.

Even for the people who made it to some of mainstream fields, be it in the fashion industry, politics or other fields, the job experience certainly includes lack of parity and equal treatment. Their status continues to be extremely vulnerable due to stigmas attached to trans* people. In the case of Kavita (transwoman) who works at a salon, her polite behaviour with (male) customers would be seen as giving "signs" or flirting, and maintaining distance would put her job in peril. Also, trans* people don't go for mainstream jobs as they anticipate the discrimination and exclusion they are going to face. The exclusion faced during the early years really affects their self-esteem and self-worth.

The lack of preparedness on the part of formal sectors and the government also poses a huge challenge in accessing livelihood opportunities. The Indian government has attempted to provide jobs to trans* people but people with high qualifications are employed in low-paying jobs like ticketing jobs on contract for limited wages and benefits. This shows how government initiatives are mere tokenism (Sriraam 130).

The constant ignorance of the government and labour market to the needs of the trans* people push them to engage in professions they feel are or will be perceived as "undignified".

Interviewees who had engaged in sex work or begging at some point mentioned that they didn't have any option but to engage in this work for survival. The scarcity of opportunities for trans* people in mainstream occupations results in them choosing livelihood options that might not be respected by society, but they are left with no choice. And even those who somehow manage to access employment face constant harassment at the workplace, making it more difficult for them to continue. With the 2019 Act, there is hope for change, but it currently has too many loopholes which might worsen trans* people's situation. These problems of exclusion cannot be simply solved by including trans* people "within an already established analytical structure" (Crenshaw 149). The government need to consider the multi-dimensional marginalization of trans* people to create holistic and sustainable programs that cater to the intersectional positionality of trans* people.

# CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I attempted to understand the challenges trans* people face in accessing "dignified" livelihood opportunities and the challenges they face in the workplace. To understand their experiences and the challenges from an intersectional lens to highlight experiences of exclusion, discrimination and violence in their formative years which impacted their livelihood opportunities later in life along with the existing challenges they are facing in accessing employment.

The study had trans* people from four trans* identities (transsexual, transwoman, transmen and *hijra* transwoman) who came from different regions across India with age groups from 21 years to 67 years. There was also diversity in terms of class, caste, ethnicity, region and profession that helped me understand the various intersectional positionality of the interviewees. The sample categorically had an exclusion criterion as a part of the sampling, that is, to not include trans* people engaged in begging and sex-work as these are the only professions that are majorly associated with trans* people when it comes to their livelihood practices. But an interesting finding that came up was that it wasn't always possible to draw watertight compartmentalization and exclude trans* people in sex-work and/or begging from the sample as it was realized that transwomen who are in different professions today, might've had to engage in sex-work and/or begging at some point in their life to sustain themselves, thus excluding sex-work and begging might not work to understand the comprehensive experiences and challenges of trans* people.

Prior to beginning the study, I had the perception that viewing sex-work and begging as "undignified" was a view held by the cisgender and heteronormative society, and used in turn as a derogatory lens to view transgender persons. But, from the interviews, it could be understood

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how the trans* people also hold the internalized notion of sex-work and begging as "undignified" and constantly seek "respectable" jobs. For some, sex-work and begging are a means of their living, their survival so they have embraced it as part of their lives, for others, they are seeking for a "dignified" job that gives them the respect and validation that they have been longing for from their families and society.  Many of the interviewees expressed their desire for a "dignified" job so as to gain the respect and acceptance from their families that they never had and for others, it is just about survival.

However, the idea of "respect" and "dignity" is projected by society and law. Some of the interviewees also mentioned that their dignity isn't dependent on their job as long as they have a means of survival. Sheeba (*hijra* transwoman) says, "No one wants to do sex work or beg but sometimes life doesn't give you any option. You will do anything to fill your stomach. Dignity doesn't fill your stomach, money does." The idea of "dignity" is stressed time and again by the government in the Act and in their policies and programs.

However, in the name of "dignity" and "respect", they are given low-paying jobs to highly qualified trans* people also. These jobs are meant to "protect the dignity" of trans* people but appears to be something that's dependent on external factors. "The state can take away dignity in places where one gets driver's licenses, workplaces, and then design to give it in places like low-paying jobs. Dignity thus conceived establishes an unequal relationship between the state and the citizen, where the latter is made vulnerable to the state's power of giving and taking away this ambiguous status" (Saria 99). The State is using "dignity" and "respect" to employ trans* people in poorly paid positions. Moreover, to have a "dignified" job comes with some sort of privileges as not every trans* person is able to take up a low-paying job for "dignity". As Sheeba mentioned, "dignity" doesn't ensure their survival, money does.

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We saw in the study that trans\* people are engaged in mainstream professions from modelling and event management to working in the social sector, politics and corporations, and a myriad of other professions. This shows the different occupations they are engaged in besides the popular notion of trans\* people working in begging and sex-work. Having said that, to access these livelihood opportunities, they had to go through numerous challenges which a cisgendered person might not have to go through. The systemic bias and exclusion from childhood to adulthood create several barriers to accessing "dignified" work opportunities. And even when they are able to access these opportunities, they are not able to continue with the job due to discrimination and harassment at the workplace.

Crenshaw's intersectionality lens was adopted to study and analyze experiences of exclusion, discrimination and violence at various levels which showed how different social factors overlap with the gender identity of trans\* people and marginalize them further, resulting in limited livelihood opportunities. It was also concluded that the Transgender Act, 2019 overlook the multiple social identities and doesn't provide a clear, inclusive, and sustainable legal solution to the problems of trans\* people, thus leaving them to fend for themselves.

## 5.1 Tying it All Together

The first chapter of this thesis highlights the gender binarized system on which the cis-gendered society is structured in India and how it systematically excludes and marginalizes trans\* people from their formative years. The transphobic society makes it difficult for a trans\* child to survive and thrive in a healthy, happy, and inclusive environment which later creates barriers to accessing livelihood opportunities.

In the first chapter, we talked about the experiences of trans\* people with their families, with their community and with the educational spaces and how these spaces and people play a

role in socializing and conditioning the child into the heteronormative gender binaries. And when the child don't fit into these rigid binaries, they face emotional, physical, and sexual abuse from their families, neighbours as well as educational institutions which severely impacts their self-esteem, self-worth and future opportunities.

Lack of familial support creates traumas which are difficult to heal from and which also impact their livelihood opportunities. Most families consider trans* identities as a physical and mental defect which leads to a trans* child go through severe mental strain and agony. Many of the interviewees stated that they are still dealing with childhood traumas which have impacted their personal and professional lives. The lack of validation and support from their familial setting makes them continue to seek validation later in their lives, be it in terms of their professional or personal choices. Sheeba (*hijra* transwoman) mentioned how she has been looking for approval and acceptance from her family for the last 14 years. She said that she wants to do something great with her career so that her parents can be proud of her and accept her. Trans* people have to constantly go through rejection in their lives, especially from their familial relations which adds more layers to their marginalization.

In this research paper, we observed that a lack of support or acceptance within their families compels transgender individuals to depart from their homes at a young age or be forcibly expelled. This results in their discontinuation of education, posing a significant obstacle to accessing respectable employment opportunities. Additionally, the absence of inclusivity and ongoing bullying at school often drives them to abandon their educational pursuits. This leads to many of the transwomen joining the *hijra* community and engaging themselves in sex-work or begging. Without proper education and experience, they can't access mainstream jobs. And those

who don't join the *hijra* community are forced to take up jobs in the informal sector which are low-paying jobs without access to social schemes like pension or family benefits.

The intersectional positionality of the trans* people played a major role in determining their experiences of othering, exclusion, and violence. Various factors like caste, class, region, race, language, gender and many others impacted access to opportunities in the formative years and in turn their later lives. Various trans* identities also went through different experiences. For instance, the visible appearance of transwomen made them more prone to discrimination and harassment by society whereas the intersectional positionality of a transman, of being a man in a female body creates many layers of barriers and abuse in a patriarchal society. They have to fit into the mold of masculinities while being in a female body which is always vulnerable to violence and abuse. This intersectional marginality also means different experiences of exclusion and discrimination which need to be considered by the government in framing policies and programs for trans* people to create sustainable and contextual livelihood models so that no trans* identity is left behind.

The personal experiences of trans* people in their formative years were a big part of this thesis approach to understand the livelihood situation as the personal and professional experiences flow into each other and have a major impact on access to resources and support when it comes to livelihood. The interviewees and trans* activists time and again stressed how the exclusion starts from very early in their lives and penetrates their professional lives later in their life which made it more pertinent to analyze their formative years' experiences to understand their position in the labour market.

The exclusion of childhood experience from framing policies and programs leads to unsuccessful intervention programs and thus doesn't change the livelihood situation of trans*

people. Unless the caregivers are made aware and sensitized and more inclusivity is created in the childhood experiences of trans* people, the challenges in accessing "dignified" livelihood will remain a huge problem. All the trans* activists I interviewed stressed the need for the Indian government to make holistic programs that consider the childhood experiences of exclusion and intersectional positionality of trans* people to create better access to livelihood opportunities. The social-cultural exclusions need to be solved by various stakeholders for more economically inclusive spaces.

The second chapter of the thesis focus on the current experiences of trans* people in accessing employment and the challenges they face at the workplace. Systematic discrimination from childhood to adulthood impacts their situation in the labour market. Lack of education and financial support from parents has a huge impact on their livelihood options. To qualify for a job, one needs to have education and experience and both of these opportunities are denied which excludes them from mainstream jobs. Many join the *hijra* community due to the sustainable work model they have, even though it is not respected by society, it is about survival, nothing else matters. It is also a lack of job opportunities in the mainstream for trans* people that force them into sex-work and begging.

Even when certain transgender individuals manage to secure employment in the mainstream job market, they encounter persistent difficulties in maintaining their jobs due to the ongoing harassment and bullying they endure. Like the familial spaces and educational institutions, the labour market isn't trans* inclusive. They continue to struggle with wage gaps, constant harassment and unequal treatment. Without many opportunities and options, the existing job spaces have become toxic for trans* people to work in.

Although the government has recognized transgender as the third gender, just the recognition isn't enough. There is still a long way to go when it comes to understanding the diversity of trans* identities, creating a holistic work model, and creating non-discriminatory workspaces. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2019 is silent on reservations (quota) for the community in education and employment. It does not provide an adequate definition of discrimination towards trans* people, which is necessary when public spaces - jobs, education, and the aspect of having families - are being opened out for them. Without reservation (quota) for trans* people in education and employment, they will continue to have a marginal presence in the labour market.

And even though some of the policies are in place, there is a huge gap between the policies on paper and their implementation on the ground. The State is still not able to implement the laws fully and effectively. Trans* people continue to face violations of their rights on an everyday basis, facing unreported hate crimes. Every year, the government gathers NCRB data detailing crimes against individuals, but there is no explicit mention of offenses committed against transgender individuals (Jaddidi and Sharma). The law and police ignore the atrocities faced by trans* people and sometimes they are themselves perpetrators of it. Lack of proper awareness on legislation and sensitization of trans* issues lead to further invisiblization of trans* people by the legal system.

The alienation and discrimination start as soon as trans* people's differences become visible to family and society and that leads to marginalization and stigmatization. Their marginality can be attributed to the heteronormative attitude of society and lack of legal support due to deliberate neglect of their existence. For a sustainable change to be possible, one needs changes in three dimensions: "attitudinal, infrastructural, and institutional" (Mishra 32). In order

to change the centuries-old attitude of the cis heteronormative society, the State need to design programs in schools, with parents, and society members to aware and sensitize them towards the identity, background and experiences of trans* people. The State also need to create basic infrastructure like inclusive washrooms so that trans* people can feel safe, and their basic needs can be met. It's also imperative to make a systematic change in the institutions for a sustainable change like an inclusive curriculum in schools, reservations in education and employment, non-discriminatory policies for trans* people at the workplace with proper legal recourse in case of violation.

For the State to empower and mainstream trans* people into livelihoods, they need to create enabling and inclusive ecosystem. The State uses a single-axis framework in the "conceptualization, identification and remediation" of trans* people's issues which leads to a lack of holistic policies that cater to the intersectional position of trans* people (Crenshaw 149). Trans* people need laws and programs that provide them equal rights as any other citizen and try to dismantle years of marginalization they have to undergo in their policies and programs. Arguably, the law can't change everything, but it can bring a sea change in the system and the way the society views trans* people. It is the government's responsibility that no minority group is left behind in accessing their rights.

The marginalization of trans* people compounded with intersectional positionality pushes them further into the margins (Crenshaw). Absence of legal documents of identity, absence of family support, lack of education and hostile attitude of the society, all add to the limited livelihood opportunities for trans* people. Their invisibility in society has led to further marginalization. Every interviewee told me at the end of the interview that they just want people to be more aware of their identities and sensitive about their experiences and choices. Trans*

people live with painful experiences without much support and understanding from the cis-gendered society. The multidimensional marginalization of trans* people continue because of the convenient ignorance of the heteronormative society and the State.

Trans* people have been long denied their basic rights because of the stigmas attached to them. A shift in the societal mindset along with more holistic and intersectional programs and policies for trans* people is essential to improve their lives. They should be able to enjoy the same rights as other members of society. It's imperative to not only protect their rights but also proactively make efforts to reverse centuries of marginalization.

This thesis will be a resourceful addition to the existing literature and discourse to understand the livelihood patterns of the trans* people in India. The richness of the study lies in the fact that the findings are grounded in the understanding of the everyday challenges, ostracization and multiple marginalization faced by trans* people. The thesis showcases the failure of the State to include intersectionality and how it has impacted the livelihood situation of trans* people. It includes the subjective experiences of trans* people vis-a-vis their livelihood situation which is unique as the current discourse is only on livelihood in isolation. The wide sample criteria allowed the inclusion of trans* identities from different backgrounds, giving a unique understanding of the intersectionality within the positionality of a trans* person and how each one is impacted similarly yet differently by structural gender binaries and the exclusion resulting from it. It's important to take the discourse further in understanding how the structural barriers can be removed by different stakeholders and how the policies on livelihood for trans* people could be more holistic and sustainable, considering the different positionality of trans* people.

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**Interview Guide**

**A. Basic Personal Details of the Respondent**

1. Name (either your current preferred name and/or name at birth)

2. Preferred Pronouns

3. Gender identity

4. Age

5. Current place of residence

6. Livelihood

**B. Educational Experiences and Career-Related Aspirations**

1.     Could you complete all 12 years of your schooling?

2.     School – Co. Ed/ All girls/ all boys

| If yes: | If no: |
|---|---|
| Was your schooling funded by parents throughout? If no, who else was it funded by? | Reason for discontinuation of schooling |
| How conducive was the learning environment socially (peers, teachers and other staff members)? | Did you receive schooling in any other way (like home schooling, etc.) |
| Conduciveness of the school and college environment | Any support in terms of education from any family |

| | |
|---|---|
| infrastructurally (issues in accessing spaces like washroom, playground, changing room etc.) | member(s) |
| Were you aware of your gender non-conformativity? If yes, then how sensitive were your peers and teaching staff? | |
| Any other instance(s) of gender-based discrimination, violence etc. | |

3.      Highest educational qualification

-       If done graduation, questions from the above "if yes" box

-       If not done graduation – reason for not doing/ dropping out

4.      Dream job/aspiration(s) when you were a kid

5.      Did your dream job/aspiration(s) change with years as you were growing up? If yes, what was the reason for this change?

6.      If given a chance, what other occupation(s) or job role would you like to engage in?

(a)     What draws you to the said profession

(b)     Do you know anyone from that profession?

(c)     Have you ever applied for this job?

(d)     If no, the reason(s) behind the same

(e)     If yes, how did it all pan out?

7.     Was your gender identity an impediment in applying for or achieving your dream job?

If yes, any instances of sexual harassment, violence, sexual favours being asked or demanded etc. in educational institute(s)?

-     Nature of harassment, sexual favour etc.

-     Repercussion etc. in case you denied the sexual favour(s)

-     Any impact it made on your education or social image

-     Did you make or file a complaint?

| If yes: | If no: |
|---|---|
| To whom | Why didn't you make or file the complaint |
| What were the aftermaths | Did you share the same with a confidant? If yes, what was their response? |
| Was the perpetrator punished | |
| Any dire consequences that you had to face | |

**C. Childhood and (Birth) Familial Experiences:**

1. Earliest recollection of gender dysphoria

2. Any communication about it to someone? If yes, their response? If no, what was the reason for not sharing the same with anyone?

3. Coping and/or support source(s)

4. Response of peers, friends and teachers to your gender expression

5. Did the level of acceptability by these people change eventually?

6. Childhood experience(s) that stayed with you

7. Any instance of mental and/or physical violence or abuse by birth family on grounds of your gender identity and/or gender expression

8. Any instances of gender-based violence, gender "corrective" mechanisms etc.

(a) Your response to the same

(b) Could you tell anyone about it?

(c) Did you have to leave the house? / Were you forced to leave the house

(d) If yes to the previous question, whom did you go to reside with?

(e) If yes to the (b) question, what was the source of income for yourself?

**D. Source of Income and Income Level**

1. How long have you been in this profession?

2. Are/ were you in a paid job?

a.        If yes, what occupation was/is it

b.        Experience of getting the job

c.        Salary received

-        Was it equal to the salary received by non-trans fellow staff?

-        If not, what was the rationale given for the inequity in pay?

**E. Work Experience and Job Satisfaction:**

1.      On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with your current job or occupation (where 1 means least satisfied and 10 means highly satisfied)

-       If the rating is <5, reasons for continuing with the job

2.      Factors governing the above rating (positives and negatives both)

3.      Did you voluntarily take up this occupation? If not, what made you take this up?

4.      Initial and eventual response to your presence by non-trans staff

5.      Any instances of sexual harassment, violence, sexual favours being asked or demanded etc.?

(a)     Nature of the harassment, sexual favour etc. (in terms of pay increase, promotion etc.)

(b)     Repercussion etc. in case you denied the sexual favour(s)

(c)     Did you file a complaint? If yes, to whom; and how was it dealt with, and was the perpetrator punished?

6.      View on how workplaces can become trans-people inclusive

7.      Plans for/ experience with Transition (legal, social, medical)

**F.      Role of Legal Rights and Provisions (or their lack):**

1.      Are you associated to trans and/or LGBTQIA+ circles? If yes, how did you come to get associated to them?

2.      Awareness of trans-laws, judgements, provisions, rights etc.

3.      What do you know about the Transgender (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

4.      Views on the impact on-ground implementation of Transgender Act in domains like (but not limited to) work

5.      If you could add/remove certain provisions and clauses from the Act, they will be -

6.      Awareness of rights at your workplace

7.    Experiences with or observations of implementation of these rights and provisions at own

workplace


☐    CLOSING REMARKS: Any other remarks, experiences, observations, etc that you would

like to share or ask any questions.