GENDER IDENTITY IN REAL-TIME SOCIAL SCENARIO: A KEY TO ENDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AMONG TRANSWOMEN POPULATION

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Abstract—*Socioeconomic status is an important causal factor of one's living condition. So far various tools have been used successfully to assess the status in both educational as well as professional domains, but an approach underlining real time scenario of Transgender's living conditions in Indian setting would be first of its kind.* **Main Objective** *of the study is to extract real time data on personal feelings regarding societal issues and determine the top repeated social class in semi urban areas of Kozhikode district. For the purpose* **Survey Method** *(quantitative) was selected for data collection, here Kuppuswamy scale was incorporated into the questionnaire as a tool to measure real time traces on social scenario. After data segregation, the proofs were put through scrutiny with various correlational tests.* **Study Results** *underlines that 61% of Transgender population belonged to Lower Class. Only 15% were found to be have fairly good standard of living by standing to Lower Middle and Upper Lower category. A significant constructive correlation was found between occupation and monthly income while there's contrasting correlation between education and social class. Marital status also plays a major role in determining their current social status. Towards the* **Conclusion,** *the paper also explores on important socio-demographic variables which affected the living condition of Transgenders profoundly. The study findings will be taken to propose a Mathematical cognitive study that addresses the core problem and helps to suggest ways to resolve it.*

Keywords: *Transwomen, Socio economic status, Societal Experiences, Self-perception, Correlational Analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

Socio-Economic Status (SES) is a prime tool to identify the eligible benefiter of the government's special provisions in a society. There are currently few standardized criteria (e.g. physical, social, political, psychological etc.) regarding what might constitute for understanding one's socioeconomic condition and for the purpose various International as well as National scales are widely in use. Here in this study Modified Kuppuswamy Scale is applied throughout the study. Focusing on the target group, Transwomen has always been a part of Indian culture since ages. But in the current social scenario, they experience homelessness throughout their lifetime[1], lives with HIV, are physically attacked, face intimate partner violence, undergoes mistreatment by health care providers etc. which are the most saddening truth even in the 21st century. Hence studying the socioeconomic condition and determining the most grounded social class among the class makes a call of the day, to help Government as well as community support groups to conceptually plan legislations, social awareness and facilities that directly target their growth and development, as a gender sensitive community [2].

2. OBJECTIVES:

The literature review makes it unclear whether Indians in general understand what transgender means and whether public support for their rights depends on understanding and knowing the category well. Hence some of the important areas to be studied are as follows:

- To understand political attitudes and coalitions since the population of transgender people is menial compared to other marginalized.
- To record transgenders self-experience and beliefs about their rights in India, this is to measure the awareness about the frameworks available for them.
- To understand transgender people's perception on their socioeconomic condition and factors affecting this status, through a lens, acknowledging transphobia and discrimination as real and valid social experiences among them.
- To measure the success of Transgender Policy 2015, passed by Kerala Government.
- To propose new ways of understanding gender inclusiveness and suggest fair points for future application.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research chose survey method to execute the data collection part, as the method positively affects the willingness of respondents to report on stigmatizing identities, behaviors and perceptions. Respondents for the survey were recruited from 12 active, trans-gender-specific organizations functioning at varying domains within the state of Kerala.

Study setting
The study reached out to 150 semi-urban, homeless, and low-income transgender and gender non-conforming people from towns and villages of Kozhikode district in Kerala.

Method of data collection
The data was collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 70 questions incorporated with Modified Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Scale. The data was collected after obtaining an oral consent by a trained interviewer who has prior experience in conducting survey, which helped to avoid intra- observer and inter-observer bias. In the last section of the questionnaire, the researcher switched to open ended questions to extract data on original feelings in the transgenders mind regarding their living condition, exploring general belief about their socioeconomic condition, gratified living and societal treatment, with their relation to each other. The correction factor for the Modified Kuppuswamy scale were calculated by taking Consumer Price Index (2014) from the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India [3]. The collected data was recorded and analyzed using Microsoft excel where proportion scrutiny and comparisons were done.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Real time status of Transgender's Socioeconomic condition

According to the Index, among the 150 respondents, no one belonged to the Upper class, while (2%) belonged to Upper middle, 13% to Lower Middle, 25% to Upper Lower Class and 60% to Lower Class. Demographics and other characteristics of the sample population are summarized by participants posting on their socioeconomic condition which is shown in Table 4.1. We present the results from the bivariate analyses inspecting differences in the results according to the different identity among them.

The sample had a mean age of 31 years. More than two third (60%) of the respondents were from General category (23.75% OBC, 15% SC, 1.25 ST); 91.25% were living below the low income level (< Rs.3907 monthly); 43.25% have completed high school studies or less; and 8.75% illiterate. When queried about their gender identity, 88.75% self-identified themselves to be Transwoman and 1.25% as belonging to other identities among the Transgender population, like gay or lesbian, bisexual, queer, or questioning.

The study recorded an imbalance in the educational status and the income status, as even the highly qualified ones comparatively has a less esteemed job, hence low income. Around 55% were graduates but shockingly 70% were reported to be unemployed (Table 4.1).

Table. 4.1 Demographics and Socioeconomic characteristics divided on the basis of gender among Transgender people

	Kuppus wamy Score	Transwoman n=150 (%)	Other Gender Identities n=1 (%)
Age			
18-30		88.75	1.25
30-45		10	0
Marital Status			
Single		43.75	1.25
Married		53.75	0
Divorced/Widowed		1.25	0
Category		0	
General			0
OBC		22.5	1.25
SC		15	0
ST		1.25	0
Education		0	
Profession or Honors	10		0
Graduate	9	47.5	1.25
Intermediate or diploma	8	0	0
High school	7	15.75	0
Middle school	6	0	0
Primary school	5		0
Illiterate	4	8.75	0
Occupation		0	
Legislators, Senior Officials & Managers	10	0	0
Professionals	9	1.25	0
Technicians and Associate Professionals	8		0
Clerks	7	0	0
Skilled Workers and Shop & Market Sales Workers	6	10	1.25
Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers	5	3.75	0
Craft & Related Trade Workers	4	0	0
Plant & Machine Operators and Assemblers	3		0
Elementary Occupation	2	12.5	0
Unemployed	1	70	0
Monthly Income		0	
≥ 78,063	12	0	0
39,033–78,062	10		0

29,200 –39,032	6	0	0
19,516–29,199	4	0	0
11,708–19,515	3	0	0
3,908–11,707	2	8.75	1.25
≤ 3,907	1		0

Table 4.2: Socioeconomic status (According to Kuppuswamy Scale) v/s Gender

Score	Social Class	Transwoman	Other Gender Identities
26 – 29	Upper Class (I)	-	-
16 – 25	Upper Middle Class (II)	2	-
11 – 15	Lower Middle Class (III)	13	-
5 – 10	Upper Lower Class (IV)	24	1
< 5	Lower Class (V)	60	-

A study conducted in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in 2011 [[9]] among young adult transgenders also found illiteracy of 42.22% and Karnataka 41.18% while the study showed only 8.75% illiteracy among the sample population from Kozhikode. But percentages of people remaining unemployed is astounding from the findings. Here more number was living away from family and relatives, settled with other transgender people compared to previous works in the domain. 26.25% were into sex work though not stated in the questionnaire but shared with the interviewer and recorded. In this study almost all the people have experienced homelessness, joblessness and if employed betrayal from fellow workers. 66.25% reported being jobless for a period more than one year and 42.4% report homelessness hence take shelter in any safe place available, at friend's place, government shelters, lodge etc [4]. Following are the status of the answers received about the reason for their declining socioeconomic condition; 15% considers low educational qualification as a reason, 27.5% lack of family support, 65% lack of government support on housing and job, 10% ignorance (reported by the class with a full time job), 42.5% discrimination due to their gender identity. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 2014 report [[11]] on Transgender Persons showed 41% transgender people leave under poor life condition hence turning to begging, sex work, exhortation and other illegal activities.

Here the relation of gender identity within the category also showed a significant correlation with each respondent's social class. Transwomen are found to belong to Class III and IV more than others (Though their number is unequal in the study). Also the income status is better noted among the Transwomen, for which a significant reason found is marital status. Here 73.58% of Transwoman are reported to be married, hence, the partnership of a working/earning companion adds to income prospects and sharing of expenses.

4.2 Real Feelings among the Community regarding their Social Status and Socioeconomic condition

The real feelings among the community regarding their socioeconomic condition is not much contrasting to the result recorded in the first phase of the study but few areas of the data takes a different loop when mapped. Here 59% of the respondents are living with the notion that they have a low standard of living even when 36% of them have made to the lower middle class category. Majority rightly opines that their socioeconomic condition is not steady and the range keeps fluctuating as they lack a stable job, regular income and vulnerable living conditions. Reducing the data into general, broad codes using the phenomenological coding process of horizonalization (Moustakas, 1994), the researchers identified both common and variant themes across the survey data. In all, the researchers identified eight common themes across all participants (not common to all participants but common to a majority of participants). These common themes acts as a determining factor for their fluctuating socioeconomic condition, and they are as follows: (a) Desire for dignified living (b) Unstable income source (c) Frail Unification (d) Infeasible civil rights (e) Social activism (f) Emergence of positive role models. A thick description is provided as follows to illustrate each of the themes.

4.3 Common Themes

Evolving a self-generated definition of Dignified Living: Though time has changed from non-recognition and criminalization of LGBT identities to wide spread visibility, seeking to live a dignified and fulfilling life at home, work and in public spaces is still a struggle for the community according to the respondents. 23% reported that residing in a society free of discrimination is a way to dignified living. While few others urged that the feeling of dignity not only rests on the world around us but starts with self-acceptance and following confidence built on it. This confidence and a stand for oneself bring down majority of the problem the community face. This sense of self-worth not only strengthens a positive awareness, but also allowed them to stand up for themselves when others would not [5]. Devika described her definition of dignified life is not necessarily about what goes around me, but how respectfully she started treating herself and her body, here she could entrust full control of her life and thoughts to herself. Going more on it, although not all participants used the same language to describe relation between dignified living and gender, all shared that being able to use their own words and terms to define their gender helped them cope with discrimination.

Frail Unification: Though transgender friends are believed to be unified, hang together with self-esteem and step forward for accessing constitutionally guaranteeing rights. The senior most person among the respondents has a different take, she opines that while stereotypical people propagate ideologies of hate and expands their reach, it is the community including

LGBQ as a whole who has to stand for itself collectively. Raising funds, investing on strategies and technologies should start from the marginalized crowd itself through self-realizing. While other marginalized communities mobilize themselves well, we continue to struggle to advance meaningful multilateral cooperation and teamwork to come out of the stigma. Many expressed disappointment to see the slow or lack of considerable progress in their living condition amidst social acceptance, this continues to reflect on the inabilities of members to act collectively to find a permanent solution discrimination and ill treatment. 5% shared an argument that underlines a similar theme that every transgender group divided on the basis of districts or areas, take up to fight their battles independently than functioning together. There are instances of fights and large disagreements among these groups. Hence resulting in lack of unity and collective actions.

Infeasible Civil Rights: 63% of the respondents finds the Transgender bill (Protection of Rights) passed in July 2019 inadequate on several fronts. They condemns the new law as it violates the rights of Trans people rather than respect and uplift this long-persecuted communities. 67% shares an opinion that all the organizations government or non-government should adopt a non-discriminatory policy within their institutional rules. If the organization already has an existing non-discrimination policy, propose that gender identity and expression be added to it, and If not then they should put forward language that includes other categories as well. Sreemayi Sree says that the state as well as the whole nation needs to call for strengthening the existing rule of law institutions and policies, and the establishment of new ones for sexually stigmatized population. The current government and its implementers lack fair efforts to strengthen rights protections for everyone in India. The governing class has to offer full support to awareness-raising campaigns with the help of media outlets and civil society that which shouts for access to justice and remedies, and State accountability [6]. Organizations providing direct support on the areas of housing, job opportunities, skill development and counselling, should be enjoy strong support from the government setups. Its time we ask the ruling class "Why have we abandoned transgender people and their concerns in our rush for equality?" [7]. The answer to this question will determine the direction of LGBT community development and social policy initiatives for the coming years and decades.

Social Activism: When it comes to Kerala, the state has always been a step ahead in many respects with high literacy rates, strong social indicators and various progressive gender movements. Social relations in the form of social favor, assistance, contacts and capital benefits have been found to be important determinants of satisfactory life among them. In the study, experience on feeling of belongingness is considered as a part of social relations. 82% voted that education, community social movements and a remunerated job are the best way to come out the stigma around their identity. Their

assemblage in online as well as offline platforms has proved beneficial for the feeling of togetherness, this gives them strength to march towards resilience in life. The community is found to be much active in social media sites, paving way for more visibility and participation.
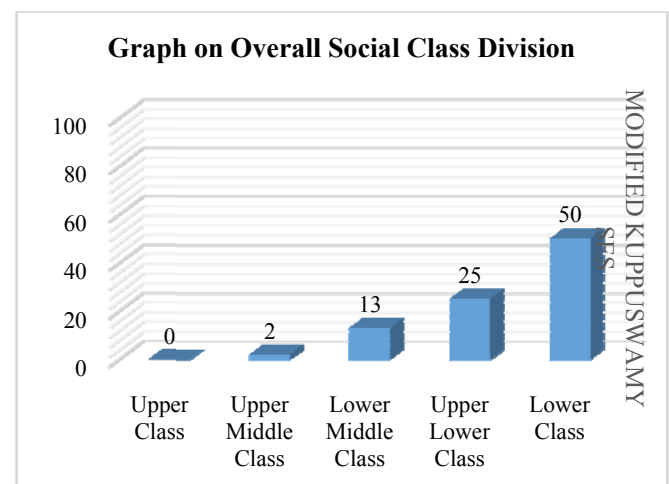
Emergence of positive role models: Each of the participants described the necessity of being aware of the extent of discrimination and prejudice toward transgender people as a resilience strategy. They described this awareness as being a stepwise development, in which they gradually recognized the extent of oppression they faced as they themselves were developing their own way of expressing their gender identity. Participants described their awareness of oppression as helping them to identify societal messages that were not trans-positive [8].

4.4 Participant Expectations

36% of the community want their style, clothes, makeup and gender reality to be accepted widely. Returning to work they don't want to be treated indifferently in any public as well as personal space. I was fascinated to watch people's reactions over time, and see which of my co-workers would come closer, drift off into the distance or keep the relationship pretty much the same, alleged Sneha from Nadakavu. They believe that social support will automatically change the status of relationships they are into, in many ways. Identification with their adopted name is what all the respondents strive for. Hence rather than asking for their name before transition, they should be allowed to be identified with the name they choose. This would make it easy for people to feel understood and not treated indifferently. With slight changes in the forms and nametags, and gender attached naming systems, this shout out can be achieved.

5. DISCUSSION

Figure 5.1: Socioeconomic status of Transgender People according to Kuppuswamy Scale

Graph on Overall Social Class Division

Like the figure shown above (Figure 5.1), 50% of the sample population belong to Low class with a score ranging less than 5 (Kuppuswamy Scale). But the records of their education, occupation and income shows a distorted pattern of connection, making the findings seem like one that needs more attention. Here there are many other factors are found to have influence one's socioeconomic condition especially of a sexual minority in an Indian setup. Even though the variables had positive correlation with each other to some extent, a strong inconsistency among the classes was seen. Many of the population who had comparatively low standard living belonged to class V of Kuppuswamy. But one with comparatively better means to live also found to be under class V of Kuppuswamy. So, Modified Kuppuswamy scale (2019) can be appropriately used to determine the lower class but determining the upper classes was difficult when it is done on a small sample size. Kuppuswamy scale which is more focused on monthly earnings, did not give the approximate picture of Transgender's socioeconomic condition. Hence a more in depth study on their socioeconomic condition and factors affecting them, the issues surrounded, problem interrelations which are not been recorded yet, are to be recorded through some real time entry preferably Fuzzy Cognitive Mapping. The modified Kuppuswamy scale which primarily considers education, occupation and Income and does not give importance to possessions, number of family members and other factors with strong effect on the condition.

Even though wealth index is an appropriate measure of socioeconomic status. It can be considered only in survey involving large number of respondents and not in individual case taking or interventions as it has many components included in it. As per this study the researcher could see that the data which voices about education, occupation and income index is similar to Standard of Living Index (with only exception on material possessions). But, it would be better to use SLI or apply a scientific method with Mathematical interpretations to obtain high specificity and help address real time issues, especially when large survey is involved.

6. CONCLUSION

Socio-economic status also influences the acceptability, accessibility, affordability, and actual usage of various available governmental and non-governmental facilities to the transgender community.

Findings suggest that transgenders experience widespread discrimination in employment, and housing, eventually falling into serious financial hardships, resulting even in starvation and health problems. Multifarious initiatives and interventions are needed for transgender community, including legal protections and social awareness to non-sensitize bias.

The scale Modified Kuppuswamy Scale here used in different parts of the country have been inappropriate to understand the exact social class of the population thoroughly (unequal status) which is also endorsed in our study. The study found

that having a scientific study with real time entry of data, taking into consideration other factors that are probable to affect the transgender life, is a preferable option in assessing the socio-economic status of an individual. This would also bring down the opinion bias and researcher's tendency of rounding off the data to a particular point. But to add, the existing Modified Kuppuswamy scale needs some more modification too. Kuppuswamy scale is the better option in assessing the socio-economic status of an individual and family to some extent, but there's lot more to be done to strengthen the scale. A scale that helps to know the degree to which one's gender influences the results is also a need of the time.

7. LIMITATIONS

The study was done on a small sample because it is a pilot study. The study is being planned on a larger scale with better representation of the community so as to get a better impression and the results published at a later date. Additional large sample size of not less than 300 would help to further probing the range of factors that matter to transgender life, including potential intervention of governmental as well as non-governmental institutions, family and community group support, experiences of discrimination etc.

Our study results have to go a step ahead in finding factors that affect living condition of the target population greatly but are yet to be explored.

The study couldn't completely strengthen the assertion that policy changes are urgently needed to secure the financial status, working condition, health and overall well-being of transgender community. Hence the findings need to go through a scientific research further documenting the socioeconomic status with traces of health and societal experiences of the population considered, on the grounds of employment, housing, healthcare, discrimination and the preventive measures they ought to take.

Though the study provides a bag of information about the life conditions and encountering's of transgender and gender non-conforming people, the survey methodology and instrument posed some limitations for this study, which are as follows:

Since the study utilized a small sample from the North of Kerala, it is unclear how representative the respondents are of the whole Kerala transgender population.

Data from the population, however, show clear demographic differences at large between the data realized by government and those collected during this study. We do not know whether these selected population patterns hold true for transgender people but in the absence of supporting data, we should be especially careful not to deduce findings about them to imply conclusions about their current living condition.

- The lack of orderly assets/ possession information in the data significantly limited our ability to identify the

pathways to deteriorating living condition among the participants.

- The survey did not directly explore mental health status of individuals and its history, Further, research has shown that the impact of adverse life events, such as being attacked or abused, is most severe among people from low income group and ones with poor health condition.

- The questionnaire included only a single item about suicidal behavior that asked, "Have you ever attempted suicide?" with assorted responses of Yes/No. In addition, the analysis was limited due to a lack of follow-up questions asked of respondents who reported having attempted suicide, about things as age, transgender status, reason, motive etc. at the time of the attempt.

- The study used self-reported data which relies on participant given inputs than observation or projective techniques. Hence there are chances of data being subject to exaggeration or attribution and affected by an individual's self-perception on the topic discussed.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Along with the education, occupation and income it is important to consider their family status, material possessions, monthly income and expenditures, Health condition, access to healthcare, sanitation facility, Societal treatment and preventative or strengthening efforts the community ought to take during the time of demand, as it is about a gender minority that are yet to be in the mainstream extensively. This descriptive study would act as a scale to be replicated at other states and geographical areas that similarly push for community representation

Even though different kinds of scales are being used to assess the socio-economic status of different sections, each of the scales have developed their own advantages and disadvantages. Hence, an appropriate socio-economic scale is in need to be developed.

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