

Socio-Economic and Educational Challenges Faced by the Transgender Community in Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the world of Transgenders with a sample of 35 Transgenders' semi-structured interviews and descriptive-surveys. The study is a triangulation of social, economic, and educational challenges. The data shows that problems correlate from different angles, since bad ideology is the core cause of social demarcation. Social demarcation is the foremost reason for educational deprivation and educational degradation is the root cause of economic deprivation of Transgenders. The social issues start from the Transgenders' own family; when they disown the Transgender-child. Parents feel regret, since the Transgender-child cannot complete their education like a common man. This lack of education creates a weak economic base. Empirical commendations to enhance circumstances are a change of ideology, skills development, business loans, vocational programs, and laws in true spirit, awareness sessions, campaign for Transgender rights, special instructions to educational-institutes, short courses, promoting Transgender persons as makeup-artist, incentive programs, implementing quota, protection and safety assurance.

Keywords: *Transgenders, Challenges, Remedial Actions, Socio-economic, Educational*

INTRODUCTION

Being the second-largest Islamic state of the world Pakistan believes in equal rights for all but the rights of Transgenders are often neglected, with society and their family members abandoning them. To understand the true challenges and complexities of Transgenders will provide empirical guidelines for social workers and the government.

The umbrella term “Transgender” denotes persons whose gender identity does not match the assigned sex at birth. For common people such as cisgender or non-Transgender their gender identity matches their sex at birth. But the gender identity of some persons does not fit clearly into these two choices and is outside the category of male or female (Bradford, 2018).

Three stages of age are involved in the developing sense of oneself as a boy or girl. At the age of 2-3 years; children learn about the label of sex for themselves and others. At the age of 3-4 years they learn about gender stability; at the age of 4-5 years' children recognize a constant aspect of sex (Slaby & Frey, 1975). One of the types of gender identity is Transgender.

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Khan (2017) highlights the total population of Transgenders in Pakistan which is 10,418 and mostly belongs to Punjab with a collective number of 4585; Sindh is at second number with 2527; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 913 and Baluchistan with 109 Transgenders. 133 Transgender are living in Islamabad and 27 in Tribal areas of Pakistan. The statistics show that 7651 live in urban areas and only 2767 live in rural areas.

This issue is not only a local issue faced in only a particular country or a specific region; but is observed globally. About 32% of Transgender and gender- diverse people do not feel safe on public Transgender-sport and 43% do not feel safe in the streets. (“Transgender People Face”, 2017). A large section of the Transgender community lives in Pakistan, but they are facing many challenges due to socio-cultural barriers (Bradford, 2018; Saddique, 2017). Different names like Khawaja Sara, Hijra, Khusra, and Murat are used in Pakistan for Transgenders (Saddique, 2017).

Unlike previous studies in which social issues are focused; this study explores three imperative aspects of Transgender challenges: social, educational and economic. Because sustainable development in Trans community is not possible only by focusing on the social aspects therefore we must consider the educational and economic aspects also. This study provides key ideas for educational development, economic growth, and social improvement of the Transgender community in our society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of countries treat gender diversity as a crime, and each year hundreds of Transgenders are killed around the world brutally (“Transgender People Face”, 2017). Haynes (2019) states that the World Health Organization has stopped the categorization of Transgender as a mental disorder after amending its health guidelines; due to its liberating effect on Transgender people worldwide. Filipovic (2013) elucidates that the resistance against Transgender can be resolved through discussion and education. Since most people don't know the reality about Transgenders, therefore the most effective and most important tool for Transgender rights advocacy is education. In Europe and North America, the identity of Transgenders has been considered from a psycho-medical rather than social perception (Eyssel et al., 2017).

Bashir (2017) states that due to an aggressive mindset; Transgenders are excluded from social activities. In the 21st century their social degradation is appalling and the way they are still mocked, ridiculed, and harassed is shameful for all of us.

Divan et al. (2016) acknowledged that the recent commitment for sustainable development goals by the international community to expend and catalyze the positive interventions is the best opportunity. The key for sustainable and equitable development is prevention of human rights violations and social exclusions. All this is as true for Transgender people as for other human beings. The 17 SDGs is paramount for all people including Transgender people and SDG-3 focuses on the support for Transgender health whereas SDG 10 is enforcing the reduction of inequality.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Two qualitative methods are used for this study; phenomenology and descriptive survey. Through phenomenology, Transgenders shared their life experiences and social workers described opinions formed during social work for Transgenders.

Research instruments

Semi-structured interviews and descriptive survey questionnaires are used as Research Instruments for this study. Items are adapted from the researcher's previous questionnaire.

Validity of instrument

Qualitative research validity means appropriateness of tools, data, and process and determines whether research questions are valid for the desired outcome or not. In other words the methodology choice is appropriate; the design is valid for that methodology, sampling and data analyses are appropriate and results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context (Kluwer, 2015). For the validity of instruments, the questionnaire is reviewed for the items by the Subject Matter Expert. 01 professor and 01 lecturer reviewed the items of the questionnaire which were modified as per instructions. SME opinion is obtained on language Translation and text Transcription.

Population

All the Transgenders in the city of Karachi, Pakistan are taken as the target population for this study.

Sampling scheme

A total of 35 respondents were selected for this study; of these 20 Transgenders and 15 Transgenders social workers were selected. 20 Transgenders were selected through Snowball sampling because they were not available easily. Through criterion sampling, 15 social workers who have at least one-year of experience as a social worker for Transgenders were selected. Three Organizations SUB-RANG, GIA and WAJOOD which are working for Transgenders were selected through simple random sampling from which further respondents were selected.

Data analysis procedure

Thematic analysis is used for analyzing the collected data. In the 1st phase of data analysis, I familiarized myself with the data by organizing and reading it repetitively. In the 2nd phase of thematic analysis, I derived codes from the data for which inductive coding was adopted. After generating the codes for the entire data, similar codes were categorized. In the 3rd phase of thematic analysis, codes were collated to identify important information from the data in the form of themes. After that themes were reviewed to ensure that these themes are truly representative of the data. After finalizing the themes list, every theme is defined, and formulated according to what we mean by each theme because it figures out how to understand the data.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The data shows that Transgenders in the city of Karachi are facing the following challenges, issues and problems in their careers. These problems are categorized socially, economically and educationally.

Note: verbatim speech of participants are included in each category.

Social challenges

The Transgender community is confronting the following social challenges:

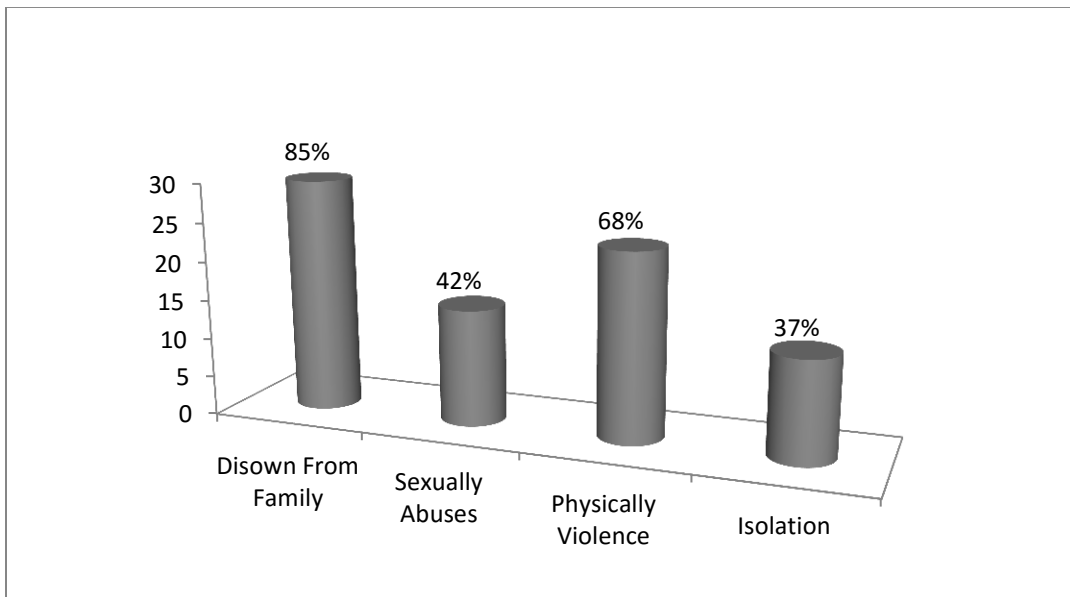


Figure 1 Violation of social rights of participants.

- **Ideology.** The 1st challenge for Transgenders is the idea that to be a Transgender is a shameful thing for a person and their family.
- **Acceptance.** As stated by Transgenders (respondent):
“Don’t come to my shop next time, because it bring curse to me”
- **Violence.** A story told by a Transgender: “A person in my own street where I was living asked me to come for dance at tonight; at my refusal, he slapped me two times.”
- **Harassment.** A Transgender person narrated that, these words were spoken to me by a young boy “Where are you going come to me, I am waiting for you janu.”

Table 1: Harassment status of participants

Harassed by	Number of Transgender	Percentage
By job cliques	03	8.57%
By schoolmates	04	11.42%
By street boys	02	5.71

- **Residency/ Homeless.** A Transgender commented: “We were five Transgenders in search of rent house, we searched for complete month but nobody was ready to give us home on rent, at last an old house was given us on the pledge of anybody else.”
- **Awareness of laws.** Transgenders themselves are not aware about their protections laws.
- **Implementation of laws.** Although laws are present in Pakistan for Transgenders’ safety they are not implemented in true spirit.
- **Police Dealing.** It is also clear from the following words of a policeman on entering an FIR for a Transgender “He shouted from a long-distance why you come here hijre (Transgenders), go outside from here.”
- **Hurdles in Public Places.** At the park a Transgender was told by a security guard “You are not allowed here, please go away.”
- **Negative Attitude.** My (Transgender’s) father said after coming home with a guest “Don’t come in front of me; keep him in a side room or away from guests.”
- **Respect.** A Transperson stated “One day I was sent out of home for five hours because my brother was arranging a dinner party for his friends. Because he said it will be shameful for me if my friends will see you.”
- **Isolation.** “I was not allowed to attend my own sister's marriage ceremony; to whom I was loyal too much” a Transgender respondent stated.
- **Enticing for suicide.** A Transperson’s brother said to him “Die as soon as possible it’s better for you, me and for our family”

Table 2: Enticing of Participants for Suicide

S. No	Urge For Suicide By	Frequency	Percentage
1	Own Family Members	06	17.14%
2	Other Society Members	04	11.42%
3	Nobody entice	25	71.42%

- **Hooting.** One participant said “Once in the street children gathered around us and started hooting and pinching, we have to run away for survival”
- **Traveling in public transport.** People don’t permit them to sit beside them.
- **Health Facilities.** In case of admission of a Transgender patient in hospital, issue of adjustment in male or female ward.
- **Abduction.** They are kidnapped and raped or used for dance parties by force. Sometimes after rape their heads are shaved and faces disfigured by the criminals who are rarely captured and punished. Some criminals also make videos to blackmail them for longtime relations and sometimes these videos are shared on social media Thus they are not safe even in their residence and powerful people take them away from their own residence.
- **Rape.** A participant shared his feelings “I was raped in 8th class by clique’s students, and nobody helped me in the school. Not even staff and principal.”
- **No safe environment.** According to a Transgender respondent “No place is safe for our community, every time and everywhere we are in danger of violence, harassment, abuses, kidnapping and rape.

Educational Challenges

Table 3: Participants' Educational Experience Challenges

S. No	Educational Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
1	Refusal of Admission	10	29%
2	Dropped out And Rejoined	08	23%
3	Forced by Family To Leave School	07	20%
4	Identity Hidden For Education	06	17%
5	Continue Without Any Disturbance	04	11%

- **Admission in school.** School staff reaction on Transgenders' arrival for admission "We have no space for your admission in our institute; go and search any other space for your education"
- **Column in the form.** Clerk said to him (Transgenders) in the school "There is no option in admission form for you; so don't disturb me again and again"
- **Use of toilet:** On using male toilet in school the respondents (Transgenders) faced this reaction "This washroom is not for hijra (Transgenders); my clique student rams me to aside"
- **Availability of resources.** Transgenders have very low income and have no resources for continuing their education. Without parents' economical support it is difficult to fulfill their educational requirements. Without a parent's support and government support it is not possible for Transgenders to afford educational charges since resource availability is a big issue for them.
- **Sitting Alongside.** A student stated to a Transgender: "Why you touch me, I hate you. Don't sit alongside me"
- **Parent's objection.** When my mother asked my father for my education my father replied "No need to waste money for khusra (Transgender's) education, keep him inside house".
- **Behavior of Cliques and Teachers.** A teacher said to me (Transgender) in classroom "Oh hijre (Transgender) what are you doing here; keep yourself away from other students and don't corrupt them"
- **Asking Anything of Teachers.** When I asked my teacher a question I faced this reaction "All students started laughing loudly and said you are not able to learn anything"
- **Students make fun.** In school different things happen. One of them is this: "Students once locked me in bathroom; after half an hour they released me and made fun of me."
- **Discouragement by my own family and relatives.** Our relatives came especially to my home for stopping my education "My relatives ignited my brother to stop my schooling and to isolate me inside house"
- **Society doesn't support.** A Transgender shared his opinion in these words "Our society only creates hurdles for our community; if anybody tries to help us society creates difficulties for him also."
- **Bullying.** Verbal bullying is a common issue inside and outside the class.
- **Participation in extracurricular activity.** In participating in extra curriculum activity a Transgender stated "Once I was willing to participate in games competition but organizer rejected me only due to gender discrimination."

- **Blame always comes to Transgenders in any abnormal case.** A Transgender reported that during schooling “I was raped by clique’s students, although I was victim but instead of getting any justice; I have to suffer long time and have to quit that school.”

Economic related challenges

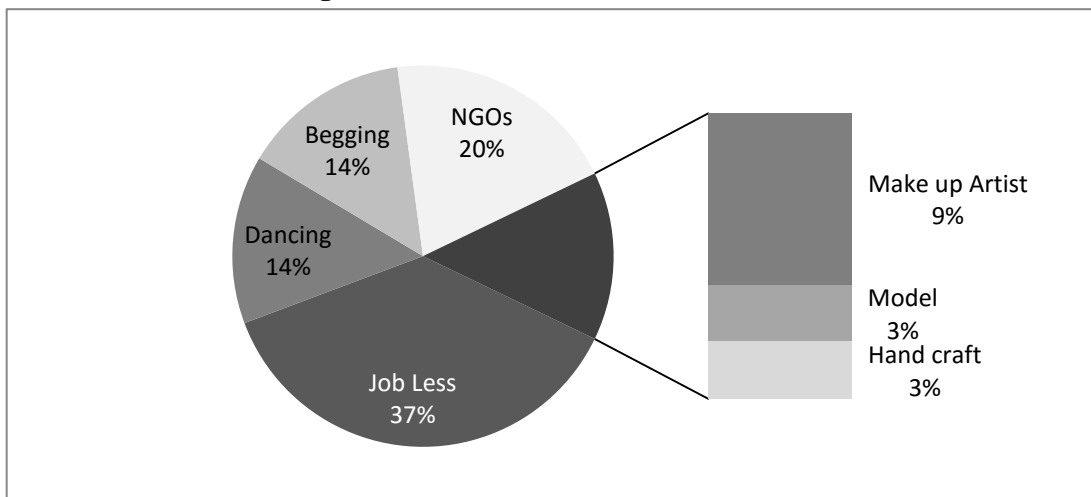


Figure 2 Jobs sectors of participants

- **Job opportunities.** A Transgender respondent said “Who will give us job; there is no job for us in this society”
- **Lack of education.** In the words of a Transgender “We are deprived from education, which destroyed our economic career as well.”
- **Lack of skills.** A Transgender told about her skills “I can dance only or can begging in the streets”
- **Respectful job.** Transgenders concise statement “Only respect less jobs are preserved for us; not only that every job becomes respect less for us due bad behavior of others”
- **Continuity of job.** A Transgender’s experience shows “We can’t continue job for long period because our family, society and job cliques makes it too much difficult for us; after some time, we have to quit from that job.” Lack of government support
- **Lack of Government support.** A Transgender (respondent) stated “All issues come due to failure of governance; our government is not successful to implement the laws in true spirit.”
- **Not ensuring the quota.** How much quota is reserved for you? “Quota is only in files and documents, not practically anywhere.”
- **Inheritance issues.** A Transgender shared their experience “After parents Transgender Childs are not even asked; when heritage is divided among kindred. Sometimes parents themselves deprived Transgenders from any share.”
- **Guru shares.** Most Transgenders live in Guru (teacher) and chela (pupil) relationship, every Transgender has to pay her Guru from income to run the household.

- **High rent for houses.** Transgenders' feeling about rent "What a cruelty is this, we are disowned from parent's house; and we can't purchase because we have low income due to gender discrimination. Instead of giving us any reduction in rent, people charge extra rent from us." Both private and government sectors ignore Transgenders
- **No family support.** A Transgender respondent said: "At 1st we are ignored from our own family then by others; actually misfortune starts from own home from own family."

In view of remedial measures suggested by Transgenders themselves through collected data and environmental factors; following suitable and practicable recommendations are given:

Change of ideology:

1st recommendation for the resolution of transgenders' issues is to change the prevailing ideology about them, according to which the presence of Transgenders in the house as son, brother or in any relation is shameful for parents, family members, relatives and for Transgenders themselves. This ideology urges family to deal with Transgenders with bad manners. We have to make an ideology that they are so by nature. They are not a symbol of insult; they are not a cause of regret for their family members. But the question is how we can change this ideology. Guidelines from different research papers can be taken for changing the mindset. If we succeed in changing this mindset, Transgenders' social problems can be resolved. But to change the ideology, hard work is required. The set of shared beliefs within a group, such as a nation or social class is ideology. These sets of beliefs influence individual thinking, acting, and views of the group ("Ideology example," n.d.).

Karachi is Pakistan's biggest city and has a population of 16.62 million approximately; of these, the Muslim population is 96.45%, Christians 2.42% and Hindus are .086%. Of the Muslims, 95% are Sunni, 5% Shias and a significant minority group practice Ismailism which comprises Nizaris (Agha Khanis) ("Religion in Karachi," n.d.). The majority of the population of Karachi are Muslims and they all strictly follow their religious leaders and sect doctrines. All of these believe in humanity; we need to convince their religious leaders that they should motivate their followers, with their own sermons to treat Transgenders as equal human and not suppress their rights. Through this we can change the mindset or set of beliefs or ideology of 96.45% of the Karachi population.

Enforcement of laws:

Numerous laws have been passed, including the Transgender Protection Rights Bill. The real problem, however, is implementation of laws in our country. Due to this sluggish implementation of law, every law becomes weak. The present scenario of harsh dealing with Transgenders can only be changed through implementing laws in their true spirit. Otherwise all new and old laws will be useless in practical life.

Awareness sessions for the public:

Both Transgenders and the general public need awareness about Transgender rights and laws passed for them, so that people can take care of them and Transgenders can fight for their

rights. For awareness different sessions can be held by NGOs, Transgenders' organizations and the government sector. In schools, colleges and universities these sessions can be conducted to raise awareness about Transgender rights.

Prohibition and motivation through religion:

In Pakistan, generally, and especially in Karachi people follow religion strictly; this can be used as a positive step for Transgenders, because Islam and other religions give instructions to treat every human politely.

Campaign for Transgenders' social rights:

A campaign should be arranged for Transgenders' social rights. This campaign can be conducted through electronic media or print media. This campaign can boost the social rights equality movement of Transgenders and discrimination can be minimized if the campaign is successful. The Transgender community is already struggling for their social rights and NGOs are working alongside them. If we help them with a strong campaign it can be supportive for them.

Public service messages on media:

Media roles are very important nowadays, so every channel should share a public service message on TV about rights awareness and humanity.

Special instructions for heads of educational institutes:

For the solution of educational challenges of Transgenders, a letter of special instructions from government to all government and private educational institutes should be issued for Transgenders that no school, college, and university should deny admission to Transgenders.

Amendments in admission form:

In order to assist Transgenders to get admission in educational institutions, the admission forms must provide a blank column for gender in which people can mention gender like male, female or Transgenders. This will resolve many issues. Other forms can be changed in a similar way with little effort. This little amendment in form can help for Transgenders' admission in schools.

Scholarship program:

Through a scholarship program we can help Transgenders to fulfill their educational needs. Scholarship programs already exist in our education system; we only need to give Transgenders a little space in this system.

Special training of teachers and staff for Transgenders' protection:

Through special training of teachers and staff the issue can be handled to ensure the safety of Transgenders inside an educational institute.

Short term skills development courses:

Until and unless we develop skills in Transgenders they cannot go forward in their life. Without skills nobody will give them a chance. One field that can be exploited is beauty parlor and makeup artist work, since this area interests most of them.

Charity based educational institutes:

To meet the educational needs of Transgenders in the city; charity based educational institutes may be set up to supplement the numbers of charity organizations which are working for the welfare of humanity.

Special education programs:

A special program like Talem e Balighan can be arranged for Transgenders who have dropped out of school or those who never attended school. This will enable them to get some basic education.

Incentives for giving jobs to Transgenders:

The private sector needs to be encouraged, to give jobs to Transgenders; this can be done through giving them discounts in taxes and other incentives.

Implementation of quota:

Government has to ensure that the Transgenders quota is being implemented in all government sectors. The judiciary is also avoiding following the quota in their department; thus playing the key role in disenfranchising Transgenders.

Loans and skills for business:

Through business loans and business skills; we can bring Transgenders into the mainstream to increase their earning capability. Without loans and skills, they will not be able to create earning space for themselves.

Vocational training program:

Vocational training program is another good option for the development of Transgenders' economic situation. Through this training program they will be able to do something for themselves.

CONCLUSION

From the collected data it is determined that the Transgender community in the city of Karachi are facing a number of challenges like other cities of the country. Karachi is the biggest and most populated city of Pakistan; it has the highest Transgender population in Pakistan according to the last census. However, the population statistics do not satisfy the Transgenders community of the city; the reason being that the statistics do not show realistic results e.g. it is hard to believe that the population of Transgenders in this big city is only 1,497.

Since the data for this study is collected from Transgenders and social workers; so their own perceptions and point of view are reflected in the data. In this study Transgenders are given a

chance to fully explain their point of view through open ended questions. The main reason behind their social demarcation is the bad ideology of society about Transgenders people; according to which the presence of Transgenders in the house as son, brother or in any relation is shameful for parents, family members and relatives. This ideology urges them to deal with Transgenders with bad manners. Thus they are not accepted in society which causes other social issues like harassment, violence, abuse, stigmatizations and injustice; residential issues, awareness, abductions rape, face mutilation, enticing to suicide, and teasing.

Educational challenges which are highlighted through data show that social demarcation is the main cause of educational deprivation. This social demarcation causes educational hurdles like admission problems, lack of resources, parents' objections, blackmailing, lack of protection, bad behavior, family discouragement, illegal blames, restrictions in participation in extracurricular activities and drop outs.

Economic problems are prominent in data: the foremost is educational degradation and social demarcation, which causes other fiscal tribulations like lack of jobs, low salary, lack of skills, continuity of jobs, not ensuring quota, inheritance issues, no family and government support and poverty.

The data shows the alarming condition of Transgenders in the metropolitan city of Pakistan. Social, educational and economic problems are interrelated and bonded to each other from different angles, consequently making a flow. We can't resolve them by ignoring any of them because they are linked like a chain's joints.

Social issues start from Transgenders' own family; the 1st step is when parents disown their Transgender child, do not try to understand or accept them, do not try to understand that Transgenders' feelings are not self-generated, but natural, it is not possible for a Transgender to control them and change them. This disowning ignites other social problems. Disowning means not only refusal of acceptance but also being homeless. Parents feel shame and regret at the presence of Transgenders. The question is why parents and other family members deal with Transgenders in a bad way. The main cause is bad ideology which has been prevailing in our society about Transgenders. Due to this bad ideology there is no equality, no justice, and no respect for them; these things start from home and spread in the society. Due to these social challenges a number of hurdles come in the field of education. Discrimination, hatefulness and stigmatization becomes their destiny. They cannot complete their education and this lack of education creates a weak base for economic growth. Thus their economic disaster starts from a very early age. With low education capabilities and skills; it becomes difficult for them to secure themselves economically and without the support of parents and the government, the situation goes from bad to worse for Transgenders.

The findings of the study also support the previous studies as these seem prominent when these findings are matched with previous literature. Physical abuse and discrimination are common problems which they have to face (Shah et al., 2018). This study also provides evidence for these problems. Transgenders are often restrained from establishing their own settlement and that's why only backward areas with fewer facilities are available for them:

this is also proved by the current findings. Jones (2016) highlights safety concerns which are really a big barrier to research on Transgenders across the globe; the current study delves also into educational and economic concerns of Transgenders by comparing it to previous studies.

In order to resolve the issues, certain remedies have been suggested by Transgenders themselves. Empirical commendations, suggested by Transgenders to enhance the circumstances are change of ideology, skills development, business loans, vocational programs, and implementation of laws in a true spirit, awareness sessions, campaign for Transgenders' rights, and special instructions to educational institutes, short courses, promoting Transgenders as makeup artists, incentive programs, implementing quota, protection and assurance of their personal safety.

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