

AWARENESS ON TRANSGENDER AND THEIR INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THROUGH THE LENS OF TEACHER EDUCATORS.

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Abstract

People who are transgender have a gender identity or gender expression that is different from the sex to which they were born (Altilio and Green, 2011). The LGBTQIA acronym is the source of the word "transgender." Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual individual identities are represented by this acronym. The current study intends to ascertain how well-aware about transgender and their issues and how ready we are to include transgender people in higher education institutions. In order to accomplish the study's goal, the researchers used an exploratory survey research method, M.Ed. Last semester students of Central University of South Bihar served as the sample. The researchers held a semi-structured interview. The results showed that among these participants, there is a dearth of knowledge about transgender, their issues and transgender education. The study recommended that teacher training programs actively promote transgender issues and the education of this marginalized minority among students, particularly these future teacher educators or prospective teachers, by making the study of subjects that include gender inclusivity a core requirement and periodically exposing them to different facets of transgender issues.

Keywords: Transgender, Inclusion, Awareness, Genderism, Prejudice.

Introduction

Men and women make a substantial contribution to a biological life. They are seen as two faces of the same coin, but there is also a third gender, which is known as transgender. Without one of them, we cannot think for the rest of our biological lives. After the Supreme Court of India issued a landmark decision in April, transgender people are now recognized as a third gender category in 2014. Hijra, Kinnars, Shiv Shaktis, Jojappas, Sakhi, and Jogtas are the main members of the transgender community. Social acceptance of transsexual people is desperately needed. No space is available for them, for instance. They had to deal with numerous issues from both their families and other people, including rejection, physical abuse, denial of family property, and isolation.

Around 4.9 lac transgender people live in India, according to the 2011 census report, and data also shows that the population has a poor literacy rate. Compared to a literacy rate of 74 percent for the general population, only 46 percent of transgender people are literate. We may use education as a powerful tool to restore their status, respect, and dignity. A democratic nation is India. Fundamentally, education is a crucial component of democratic progress. No matter their caste, creed, sex, or other characteristics, everyone has the absolute freedom to grow and develop under the Indian Constitution. The Right to Education Act(2009) now recognises transgender people as a "disadvantage category" in the context of education. Whereas the University Grants Commission (UGC) has written to all universities to include a column for the transgender category in all application forms. In a letter to all vicechancellors, UGC secretary Jaspal Sandhu has said they should ensure human rights of transgender students are safeguarded and their mainstreaming is fast-tracked within the university and society.(Times of India,2015). Further, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also identifies transgender children as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) and provides for equitable quality education, inter-alia, for all such students.

They can no longer be denied an education at any price due to discrimination. Education is what makes a person aware of society, knowledgeable about it, sensitive to its progress, and socially acceptable. Although the transgender population has a very low rate of literacy, they have made significant contributions to society's advancement nonetheless. Even if there are fewer transgender people who can pursue their higher education in Bihar than elsewhere, they are still struggling for the same chances and rights by the government. They can't use of all opportunities, from social rights to educational rights. The understanding of educational facilities, transgender opportunities, issues and their inclusion in education system will all be covered in this paper.

Rational of the study

For the social growth of an individual as well as the development of society, education is the most crucial factor. In the current environment, it has been discovered that the transgender group receives very little meaningful education and appropriate work. The success of our country depends on maximising the potential of the transgender community. Since their acceptance and social acknowledgment in the workplace are still problems, it is now discovered that they are being compelled to earn a living by begging or performing sex work. Numerous studies on the transgender population, as NALSA (2014), highlighted worry about their identity crises and social stigma.

The process of mainstreaming should begin in educational institutions and continue at work. It takes a lot of effort from teachers and administrators to create classrooms where every student feels included. The instructors must receive the proper training in order for them to accept gender inclusivity in the classroom. Such topics must be covered in teacher education curricula. We must remember that developing various policies is not the most crucial step; rather, awareness of these rules and their implementation in practical situations are crucial. There are very few studies on potential teacher educators or teachers' awareness of transgender issues, particularly in India.

The acceptability of this group of persons in society depended on demographic factors, therefore a court decision was undoubtedly insufficient to integrate the transgender community into mainstream society in a nation like India (Roy Choudhury et al., 2016). No formal education for transgender people is common in the Indian setting, in the study on the state and challenges of transgender education in India (Rajkumar, 2016). The biggest gap in the system, according to the researcher, is that no one is aware of what transgender actually means. Sensitization won't be of any use until individuals are prepared to embrace change, and readiness can only be achieved via education. They are not exposed to advanced education as a result. (Jayaseelan, 2015).

Layton (2012) examines how a group of Postgraduate Certificate in Education Citizenship student teachers in London feel about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues in the classroom, how well-equipped they think they are to handle such issues in the classroom, what kind of training they have received from their teacher-training institutions in this area, and how it might be improved in the future. Guasp (2008) found that 91 percent of secondary school teachers reported that students in their schools are bullied, harassed, or called names for either being LGBT or perceived as LGBT. This information was found in the teacher's report: homophobic bullying in Britain's schools of London. According to Watkins (2008), who performed research on the concerns and priorities when addressing homophobia in secondary schools, teacher training institutions should be the site where new teachers are trained in LGBT issues because they are better equipped to spread LGBT education awareness. These proposals, according to the researcher, may be more challenging to implement because they depend on resources like time and money as well as backing from senior management and the government. Whereas the transgender population in India has access to educational laws, regulations, rulings, and rights; perhaps this explains why they are still marginalised in society. They lack a decent education, or more accurately, their home and school environments are not favourable for them to continue their education. Therefore, the current study's main goal is to increase teachers' or future

teacher educators' understanding and awareness of transgender issues, particularly their inclusion in education system. As a result, the goal of the current study is to learn more about a little-explored topic.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the awareness on transgender among M.Ed. students of Central University of South Bihar.
2. To study the how much they are ready to include transgender in Central University of South Bihar.

Research Question

1. Are the M.Ed. students of Central University of South Bihar are aware about transgender?
2. How much the M.Ed. students are ready to include transgender in Central University of South Bihar?

Delimitation of the Study

The present study is delimited to 25 M. Ed. students from Central University of South Bihar.

Methodology

The present research adopted an exploratory research method. The details of research methodology are presented as follows:

25 M.Ed. students from Central University of South Bihar were selected as sample for the study. Due to the data saturation researchers took small sample. Purposive sampling technique was used for collecting relevance informants. Data were gathered by semi-structured interview. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively and critical analysis has been made from that data.

Major Findings

To ascertain the level of awareness of transgender issues among M.Ed. students at the Central University of South Bihar, a semi-structured interview was undertaken. With the exception of two participants, everyone understands the distinction between gender and sex. It becomes apparent from talking with the participants that they lack a strong understanding of gender identity and gender expression. Although they have taken courses in child psychology during their B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs, they are unable to articulate in the classroom which gender identity or gender expression they value more as a teacher.

The participants' knowledge of transgender people is another major issue. Many of them have claimed that they are members of the hijra community and engage in a variety of socially unacceptable behaviors, such as clapping their hands and beseeching, accepting money after children are born and during wedding ceremonies, engaging in sex acts, staying in basti, etc. Transgender issues are misunderstood by some. Only two participants (both male and female) responded positively to the statement that it is normal and that they are also human. Even they also acknowledged that those who are "Third-Gender" do not conform to the conventional binary ideas of male or female bodies.

All of the participants agreed that there should be no discrimination between boys and girls in the classroom when the researcher questioned them about what it meant to have a gender-inclusive classroom. The researcher stated that this is the destination for transgender students. Most participants said that transgender students are not present on school grounds. They have studied the topics of "Gender, School, and Society" as part of their B.Ed. programme. The focus of this paper is mostly on the community of women, including their issues, difficulties, and other factors. Transgender-related material is not covered in the teacher education course.

The majority of participants are from various states, and they all earned their B.Ed. from various universities. The participants all responded "No" when the researchers asked if they had learned anything about the transgender population from their lecturers or faculty members during their teacher education courses or at any level of their education. They are all aspiring educators or teachers, but none of them has read any materials about transgender issues or, in particular, how to deal with transgender pupils in the classroom. They further noted that such materials are not available in the library.

The "Transgender Person Bill" of 2015 makes it abundantly apparent that all educational institutions must provide transgender pupils with separate restrooms/toilet. Participants made it abundantly evident that neither their current institute nor the institutes they have encountered thus far had separate restrooms for students from this particular community. Even none of the participants are familiar with the idea of separate restrooms/toilet.

With the exception of 4 participants, who were asked about a separate school system for transgender children, all other participants agreed that this system was necessary for transgender students to finish their education. Only these four individuals have stated that a separate educational system is unnecessary since it is time to mainstream this socially excluded minority. They should be permitted to attend the regular school and be seated with other students. They must not experience social isolation.

Researchers have questioned participants on how they will provide a safe environment for transgender pupils in the classroom. Being prospective teacher educators or teachers themselves, it is crucial for participants to understand how to create a secure learning environment for this group of children. They have stated that these topics need to be covered as course material in teacher preparation programmes so that future educators would have a solid understanding of this group of kids and their needs. They have all concurred that mainstreaming this group of pupils is highly challenging.

They also emphasised how challenging it is to educate other children in the class about transgender concerns. They said that other pupils' parents would object if this type of student was in the class. However, four individuals mentioned that it is their responsibility as teachers to embrace each student for who they are. Positive discussions on transgender issues with other students are crucial in the classroom. It must be acknowledged that they are transgender, just like men and women, and that this is normal. They are also essential components of civilization and a valuable source of labour. Teachers should endeavour to help transgender children with any problems they may have, and it is not acceptable to tolerate bullying from other pupils. Regular conversations between these youngsters' parents and the school counsellor are required. . There are many transgender people who are in respectable positions; the school administration should invite these people to speak about their experiences and inspire hope in transgender students. One participant mentioned that it is the media's responsibility to portray transgender people in a favourable light. This participant also makes it very obvious that it is now or never when it comes to having preconceived notions and unfavourable beliefs towards transgender persons.

Participants disagreed with the researcher's assertion that transgender people's self-concept can only be improved through education, saying that instead, transgender people prefer to engage in begging, sex work, and other activities. Therefore, if they continue their education, it will aid in their self-concept development and lessen discrimination that exists in their community. Four participants made it very apparent that merely receiving an education would not assist transgender people establish their sense of self or earn them respect or a suitable career. Now is the time for society to embrace the transgender population as human beings by providing them with enough education and awareness.

What are the reasons that this underprivileged population isolates itself from society, the researcher also questioned? The majority of participants responded that transgender people feel isolated and even don't want to be a part of society because of their conduct. However, five of them claimed that because of societal bias, a lack of sympathetic parents, adequate government effort, inadequate

educational institutions, and other factors, they are forced to withdraw from society. Although the transgender community has a long history dating back to the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Mughal Empire, etc., participants are unaware of this community's extensive past. Participants are unaware of the 2015 "Transgender Person Bill" and the NALSA ruling. These two discuss the fundamental rights and the law's treatment of this socially excluded population.

Last but not least, scholars have questioned whether the Supreme Court's ruling alone will be sufficient for transgender people to obtain their rights. Everyone who responded with a response said "No." According to their claims, it is crucial that society and the transgender population receive the right education and understanding. What matters most is awareness. Otherwise, all of the judgments and bills are useless.

Conclusion

The most of the participants, as has emerged from the conversation, have unclear ideas regarding transgender people. They are able to distinguish between gender and sex, but they have no real understanding of gender identity or gender sex. They are unaware of the 2015 "Transgender Person Bill," the NALSA ruling, or even the long history of the transgender community. They are unaware of the concept of a separate bathroom system, and the institution itself lacks such amenities. Such topics are not covered in the curriculum for their teacher training programme, and neither do teachers or faculty members debate them. They don't even have access to resources that can help a future educator or instructor deal with this underserved population. The need to mainstream them cannot be overstated. The conversations also revealed that educating them is really difficult. because their actions cause them to become isolated from society.

However, a small number of individuals claimed that understanding teachers can help transgender children feel optimistic and provide safe classroom. Finally, it may be claimed that participants among themselves have very little knowledge of transgender issues and blame the underprivileged group for the current state of affairs. However, a small number of participants have stated that society's adequate education is crucial for the development of the transgender community's self-concept, lowering discrimination, and enjoying a healthy life. The only thing that will change is education among transsexual people. Everyone involved has agreed that the Supreme Court's ruling alone will not result in any change. Change can only come about with the proper education, awareness, and understanding of the transgender population and society. It is a joint effort.

Suggestions

- By making the study of courses that incorporate gender inclusivity as a basic concept, teacher training programs should consciously promote transgender concerns.
- Educational institutions shall regularly host programs, if feasible by transgender individuals, to educate students and teachers about the third gender.
- Through the teacher education course teachers should be sensitized about this matter and proper skill should be provided to them to teach these students.
- Every school and institution should include an anti-discrimination cell for transgender students in order to protect them against violence, harassment, exploitation, and other forms of abuse.
- Print and electronic media should emphasis the transgender community's educational achievements and place them front and Centre rather than portraying them negatively.

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