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## Social Exclusion and Discrimination: The Struggles of the Transgender Community in Jalpaiguri

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### Abstract:

*This study explores the lived experiences of social exclusion and discrimination faced by the transgender community in Jalpaiguri, a district in northern West Bengal, India. Through a case study approach, it investigates the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional challenges that perpetuate marginalization. Drawing on qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with transgender individuals, the research highlights systemic barriers in accessing education, healthcare, employment, and legal protections. It also examines the role of societal stigma, family rejection, and lack of representation in reinforcing exclusion. The study provides insights into the community's resilience and advocacy efforts, including their pursuit of legal rights and social acceptance. By engaging with the narratives of the transgender community, this research aims to inform policymakers and stakeholders about the urgent need for inclusive policies and practices. The findings emphasize the importance of fostering a culture of equality and acceptance to address the entrenched discrimination faced by transgender individuals in Jalpaiguri and beyond.*

**Keywords:** Social exclusion, Discrimination, Marginalization, Gender identity, LGBTQ+ rights, Inclusivity.

### Introduction:

Those who identify as belonging to the third gender are referred to as hijra. The Indian subcontinent has long used the centuries-old term 'hijra' to refer to 'transvestites', 'intersex', 'eunuchs', and 'transsexual' men (Chakrapani, 2010). According to the 2011 census, there are around 4.88 lakh transgender people in India, and their literacy rate is 56.07%. There are roughly 20,266 transgender people in Karnataka, and their literacy rate is 58.82% (Kumbar, 2023).

Social exclusion and discrimination remain pervasive challenges faced by marginalized

communities worldwide, and the transgender community is among the most vulnerable. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was put forward in the Lok Sabha and passed unanimously. This case, NALSA v. Union of India, directed the Central Government and State Governments to take various actions for the betterment of the transgender community and to treat them as a third gender in order to protect their rights under the third part of the Constitution and other laws enacted by Parliament and the State Legislature. As a result, the bill became the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 after passing the Rajya Sabha and being signed into law by the president. **(Centre for Law & Policy Research)**

LGBTQ persons in India have become more tolerant and accepted in society since the 2010s([web.archive.org](http://web.archive.org), 2017) with 53% of Indians favouring legalizing same-sex marriage and 43% opposing it, according to a 2023 Pew Research Centre survey ([www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org), 2023). A 2024 study found that 44% of bisexual males and 79% of gay men have experienced verbal, physical, or other forms of violence. Respondents who publicly expressed their sexual orientation were five times more likely to experience violence than those who did not, and Muslims were 2.6 times more likely to experience violence than Hindu respondents ([www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 2024).

Jalpaiguri, a district in the Indian state of West Bengal, serves as a microcosm for exploring these dynamics. The region, marked by its socio-cultural diversity, reflects the intersectional challenges faced by transgender individuals, who grapple with not only gender-based discrimination but also socio-economic marginalization. This study investigates the lived experiences of the transgender community in Jalpaiguri, focusing on their struggles with social exclusion, access to healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and their fight for dignity and recognition.

Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this research aims to shed light on the structural and interpersonal factors that perpetuate discrimination against the transgender community in Jalpaiguri. By analyzing the historical, cultural, and policy contexts, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on social justice, advocating for inclusive practices and policies that ensure equity for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity.

In doing so, this research emphasizes the importance of understanding local nuances in addressing the universal challenge of transgender marginalization. It calls for collective action from policymakers, civil society, and the broader community to dismantle discriminatory structures and create an inclusive society where every individual can thrive with dignity and respect.

### **Objectives:**

- To analyze the various forms of social exclusion faced by the transgender community in Jalpaiguri, including family rejection, lack of social acceptance, and alienation in public spaces.
- To explore the nature and extent of discrimination faced by the transgender community in

education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services.

### Methodology:

This research has been employ a case study methodology to deeply explore the experiences of social exclusion and discrimination faced by the transgender community in Jalpaiguri. Drawing on qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with transgender individuals also consider in this investigation. 30 transgender participants through snowball sampling include in this study.

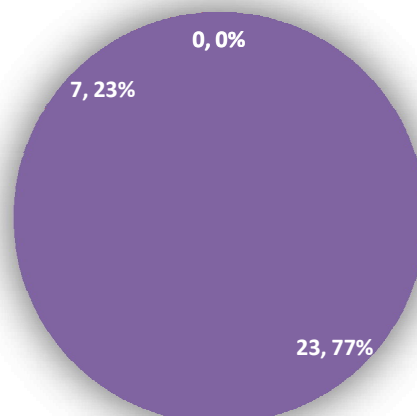
### Analysis of Various Forms of Social Exclusion Faced by the Transgender Community in Jalpaiguri -

To analyze the forms of social exclusion faced by the transgender community in Jalpaiguri, a study involving 30 participants was conducted. The findings are based on in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observational data. The key themes of family rejection, lack of social acceptance, and alienation in public spaces emerged from the data.

#### 1. Family Rejection:

Family rejection is one of the most significant forms of social exclusion experienced by transgender individuals in Jalpaiguri. Out of the 30 participants, 23 reported being disowned or marginalized by their families upon coming out or revealing their gender identity. These participants mentioned feeling a deep sense of isolation, which was often accompanied by verbal abuse and physical violence. For instance, one participant shared how their family refused to acknowledge their gender identity, forcing them to leave their home. This family rejection frequently led to a lack of financial support and emotional distress, which exacerbated the individuals' vulnerability to further marginalization.

#### Family rejection on the bases of 30 participants



**Sample Judgment 1:**

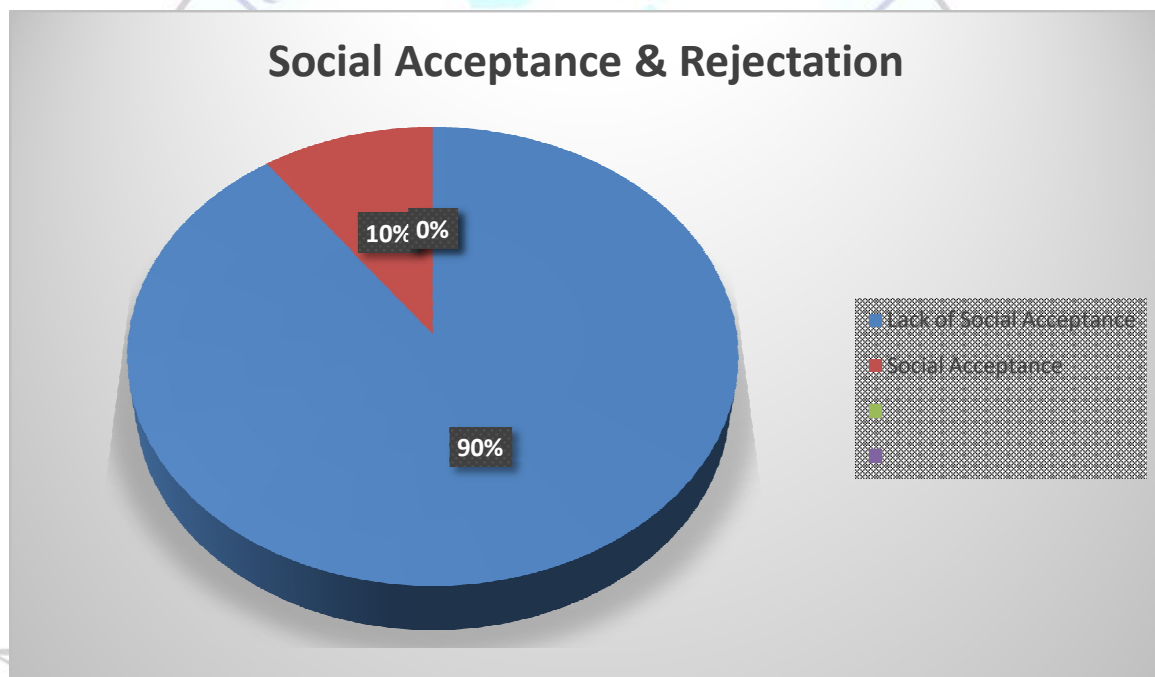
“My parents told me I was a disgrace to the family. They forced me out of the house, and I had to live on the streets for months.”

**Sample Judgment 2:**

“I was beaten and thrown out by my family after I told them I am transgender. I had no one to turn to after that.”

**2. Lack of Social Acceptance:**

A significant portion of the transgender community in Jalpaiguri faces a lack of social acceptance. This manifests in negative societal attitudes, discrimination in social settings, and exclusion from social events. Of the 30 participants, 26 expressed feeling unwelcome in local communities, especially in public spaces like markets, temples, and educational institutions. Social gatherings often excluded transgender people, with participants noting that they were treated as “outsiders” or “untouchables.” This lack of acceptance was deeply ingrained in the local culture, and many participants faced mockery or were outright ignored during everyday interactions.

**Sample Judgment 3:**

“People in my neighborhoods avoid me. Even when I greet them, they look away, as if I don’t exist.”

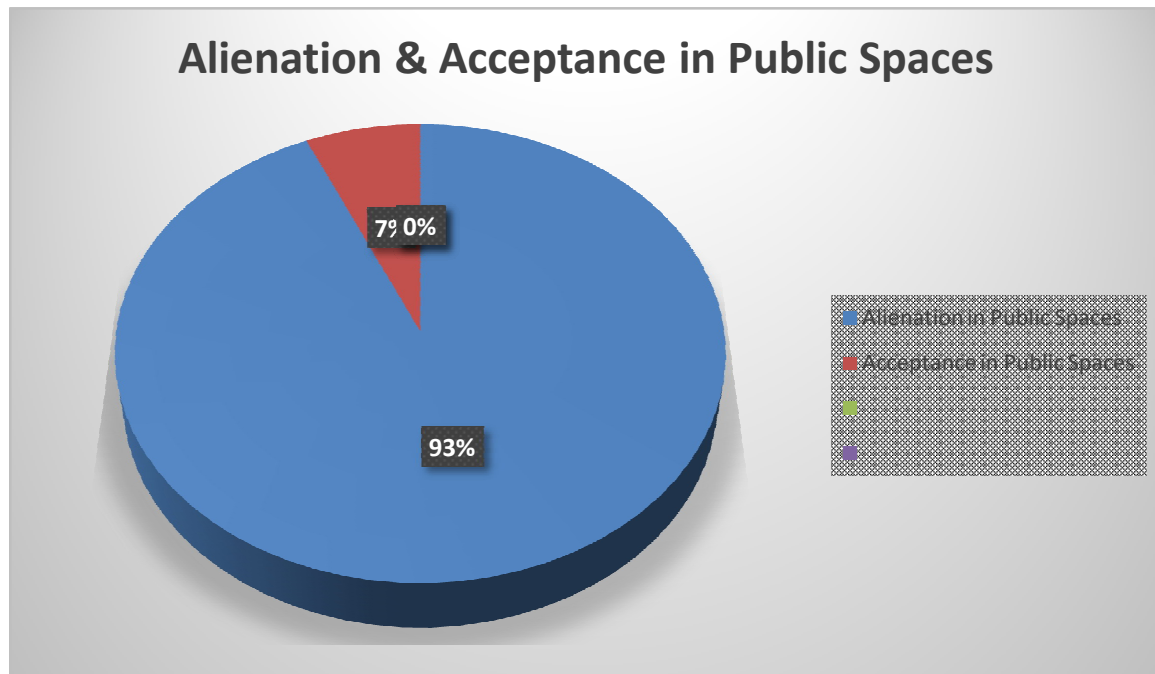
**Sample Judgment 4:**

“At school, I was bullied and called names. No one wanted to be my friend, and the teachers were indifferent.”

**3. Alienation in Public Spaces:**

Alienation in public spaces, including markets, workplaces, and public transportation, is a prominent issue for the transgender community in Jalpaiguri. In the study, 28 participants noted

being subjected to harsh stares, verbal abuse, and physical intimidation when attempting to use public facilities. In some cases, transgender individuals were forced to use separate, often less hygienic, restrooms, or they were harassed for entering spaces typically reserved for cisgender individuals. One participant recalled how they were barred from entering a public transport bus, being told that "such people" were not allowed.



**Sample Judgment 5:**

“I can’t even board a bus without being mocked. The conductor refuses to let me on, and I’m forced to walk for miles.”

**Sample Judgment 6:**

“In shops, people look at me like I’m some sort of criminal. They follow me around, and I feel uncomfortable just buying groceries.”

The study found that transgender individuals in Jalpaiguri experience multifaceted forms of social exclusion, which significantly impact their well-being. Family rejection, lack of social acceptance, and alienation in public spaces contribute to their marginalization, often leading to mental health challenges, economic instability, and physical violence. These findings highlight the need for social reform, increased awareness, and stronger protections to address the systemic discrimination faced by the transgender community in Jalpaiguri.

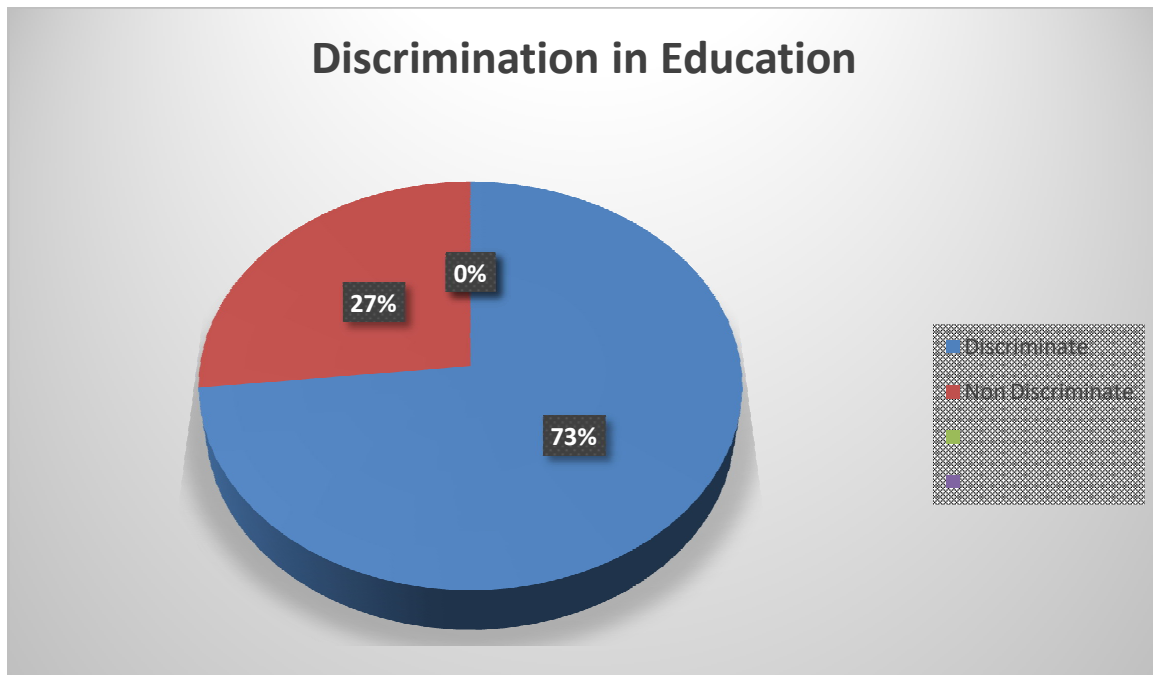
**Exploration of the Nature and Extent of Discrimination Faced by the Transgender Community in Education, Employment, Healthcare, and Other Essential Services**

This section presents an analysis of the nature and extent of discrimination faced by the transgender community in Jalpaiguri, based on a study involving 30 participants. The findings reveal pervasive discrimination in key areas of life: education, employment, healthcare, and access to other

essential services. The study aimed to explore how transgender individuals navigate these challenges and the impact on their social and economic outcomes.

### 1. Discrimination in Education:

Education is a critical area where transgender individuals in Jalpaiguri face significant barriers. Out of the 30 participants, 22 reported facing discrimination in educational settings. This discrimination ranged from being openly mocked or bullied by classmates to being denied access to educational institutions altogether. Several transgender individuals described being forced to leave school due to persistent harassment and lack of support from teachers or administrators.



#### Sample Judgment 1:

“I was not allowed to sit in the same class as other students because of my identity. Teachers never intervened when I was bullied by classmates.”

#### Sample Judgment 2:

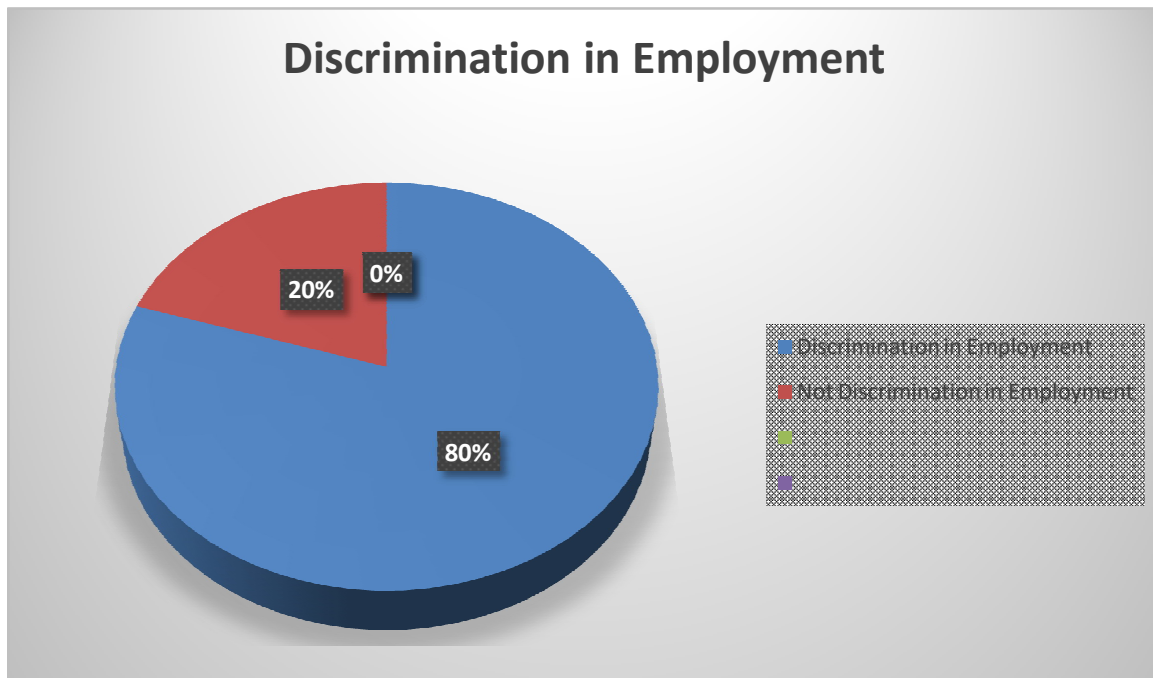
“When I applied to college, I was told I wouldn’t be accepted because my appearance didn’t conform to the ‘norm.’ They said I was a ‘disruption’ to the classroom.”

In some cases, transgender students reported being pressured to drop out of school after experiencing persistent harassment and discrimination. The lack of inclusive policies and sensitivity training for educators exacerbated these challenges.

### 2. Discrimination in Employment:

Employment discrimination was one of the most pronounced forms of exclusion, with 24 out of 30 participants facing challenges in securing or maintaining employment. Many transgender individuals reported being overlooked for job opportunities or experiencing dismissal from positions shortly after revealing their gender identity. Common forms of discrimination included verbal abuse,

lower wages, and unequal treatment in the workplace.



#### Sample Judgment 3:

“I worked at a local shop for six months, but they fired me once they found out I was transgender. They said customers wouldn’t accept me.”

#### Sample Judgment 4:

“In my job as a security guard, I am paid less than my colleagues who do the same work. I have asked for better treatment, but I am ignored.”

The majority of transgender individuals in the study found employment in informal or low-paying sectors, such as street vending or manual labor, often because of discrimination in more formal job settings. Even within the informal sector, they faced exploitation and lack of labour rights protection.

### 3. Discrimination in Healthcare:

Discrimination in healthcare settings was another critical area of concern. A significant number of participants, 18 out of 30, reported being denied medical care or receiving substandard treatment due to their gender identity. Healthcare providers often exhibited ignorance about transgender-specific health needs, resulting in inappropriate treatments or outright refusal to provide care. Participants also reported being misgendered by medical professionals, which further stigmatized their health experiences.

#### Sample Judgment 5:

“When I went to the doctor for a health issue, the nurse looked at me and asked, 'Why are you even here?' I was refused care because I am transgender.”

#### Sample Judgment 6:

“I had to go to a clinic for a routine checkup, and the doctor wouldn’t touch me. I was told to go to a 'special' clinic for 'people like me.’”

Many transgender individuals, particularly those seeking gender-affirming healthcare, were forced to travel long distances or rely on unqualified practitioners, increasing their health risks.

#### **4. Discrimination in Other Essential Services:**

Transgender individuals in Jalpaiguri also experience discrimination in other essential services, including housing, banking, and legal services. Out of the 30 participants, 15 reported being denied rental housing because of their gender identity, with landlords often refusing to lease property to transgender individuals. Banking services, such as opening an account or receiving loans, were also difficult for many participants due to the lack of gender identity recognition in official documents. Furthermore, some transgender individuals encountered prejudice when accessing legal assistance or dealing with official paperwork.

##### **Sample Judgment 7:**

“I was told by a landlord that my gender identity was 'not acceptable' for renting their house. I had to find a place to live in a slum area.”

##### **Sample Judgment 8:**

“When I went to open a bank account, the clerk refused to process my request because the name on my ID didn’t match my appearance. It took several weeks to get it sorted.”

The study reveals the deeply entrenched nature of discrimination faced by the transgender community in Jalpaiguri across education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services. The transgender individuals in the study reported significant barriers to accessing quality education, stable employment, appropriate healthcare, and necessary social services. The pervasive nature of this discrimination not only affects their immediate well-being but also restricts their long-term social and economic mobility, exacerbating vulnerability and marginalization.

#### **Findings and Conclusion:**

This study highlights the pervasive social exclusion and discrimination faced by the transgender community in Jalpaiguri, focusing on key areas such as family rejection, social acceptance, access to education, employment, healthcare, and essential services. The findings reveal that transgender individuals often face severe marginalization, with 23 out of 30 participants experiencing family rejection and 26 encountering social alienation. Discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare is widespread, with significant barriers to accessing quality services, fair employment opportunities, and appropriate medical care. Additionally, transgender individuals face prejudice in housing, banking, and legal services, exacerbating their vulnerability. Despite these challenges, the transgender community in Jalpaiguri displays resilience and continues to advocate for their rights, emphasizing the urgent need for inclusive policies and societal acceptance. The study

concludes that comprehensive social reforms, including legal protections, education for service providers, and greater public awareness, are essential to fostering an equitable and inclusive environment for transgender individuals in Jalpaiguri and beyond.

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