

Discrimination & Dilemmas of the Transgender (Hijra) Population in the Emerging Industrial Society of Bangladesh

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Transgender people (Hijra) in Bangladesh lack proper human and civil rights. Poverty and exclusion from the minimum daily necessities like healthcare, housing, and work are a reality for them. However, many transgender people live in Bangladesh when the government, NGOs, and social organizations lack adequate policy and strategic implementation to eradicate the socio-economic upheaval of transgender people. The Government of Bangladesh has passed a protection act for the rights and welfare of transgender people, which has limited implications. Social inclusion in the Bangladeshi community is a significant challenge for transgender people. From this reality, this study aims to investigate the case of transgender people in Bangladesh by discussing the “Social Alienation Theory” of Karl Marx.

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Introduction

Transgenders or Hijras in Bangladesh suffer significantly because of socio-economic, religious, and cultural aspects. Transgender or Hijra people suffer immensely as their families, societies, and national government disrespectfully ignore their fundamental rights to affirm and include them in their constitutional and civic rights (Habib, 2013; Abedin & Sarker, 2022). According to Karim (2013), transgender or Hijra people in Bangladesh are looked down upon and treated inhumanely because they do not have a socially accepted gender identity, even though the Government of Bangladesh acknowledged transgender as “Hijra” in 2013.

Accordingly, the government enacted the law in the national parliament in 2014 to ensure their fundamental rights (Hossen, 2019). However, research suggests that the reason to include transgender people in constitutional rights was internal and external pressures on the government. For ex-

ample, for a prolonged period, local and international NGOs and other human rights organizations, including the United Nations, exerted enormous pressure on the Bangladesh Government to recognize the transgender community in Bangladesh. However, finally, even though the Government made this law, its implementation is still far from reality (Anjum, 2021; Raidah, 2022).

Ullah and Chowdhury (2022) accused the Government of Bangladesh and NGOs of inadequate policies to protect transgender people's fundamental rights in Bangladesh. The authors also indicated that the state did not take any significant measures for their rehabilitation. Raidah (2022) published a piece of news in Bangladesh's leading English newspaper, *The Daily Star*, on a critical error in transgender policymaking, indicating that the state is struggling to fulfil its fundamental rights after recognition, and they are getting harassed in the omnipresent. These marginalised, excluded transgender people were forced to abandon their families and started living with "Guruma" (Godmother) (Khan et al., 2009). "Guruma" is mainly the leader of their community who controls transgender people. "Gurumas" depend on informal jobs to earn livelihoods (Hossen, 2019). Another statement claimed that syndicate groups dominated transgender people in specific areas who have connections with political leaders, police, and NGOs. These groups squeeze money from a particular place and disseminate a percentage with the political leaders. Transgender people are harassed, isolated, discriminated against,

and faced with social stigma in Bangladesh (Aziz & Azhar, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2018).

In 2009, the first report regarding gender and sexuality in Bangladesh, presented to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights Universal Periodic Review (Hossain, 2019), flagged at any high-level international conference as a historic movement. Bangladesh's government categorically contradicted the suggestion in the statement to decriminalize consensual same-sex sexuality by abolishing section 377. After that, the foreign minister of Bangladesh rejected the presence of homosexuality during the meeting of the report. Reza (2013) reported at "Global Voice" about the first homosexual marriage in Bangladesh between a Hindu woman and a Muslim woman, both arrested under section 377 of the Penal Code, 1860.

Our investigation shows that Human Rights Watch conducted a few interviews with six transgenders, or "Hijra", men living in different regions of Bangladesh in 2017. Respondents told Human Rights Watch that they face bullying at school, barriers to employment, difficulty accessing health care, as well as harassment and verbal abuse in both public and private settings. Moreover, transgender, or "Hijra", feared for their safety in an environment of impunity for attacks on minorities by religious extremists. In the interviews, respondents also asserted that when they face severe threats from any group of people and if they seek help, the authorities deny their

request because of their gender identity and force them to be targeted. Therefore, Human Rights Watch called on the Government of Bangladesh to better protect the human rights of transgender, or “Hijras”, by developing legal mechanisms that allow transgender individuals to change their official gender on legal documents and by enacting an anti-discrimination law that expressly prohibits discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation (see Human Rights Watch, 2018; Khanam, 2021).

Objective, Methodology & Research Questions

Our objective is to unearth why and how the Transgender, or “Hijra” population in Bangladesh are severely traumatized while having minimal or, at some points, no fundamental civic and human rights. The article reviewed secondary research, which employed secondary data to triangulate confirmation and interpretive approaches for comparable outcomes across the broadest probable contexts. Existing studies on the third gender population were sought out by exploring Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science. The review paper’s theoretical considerations were inspired by Karl Marx’s (1844) “Alienation Theory” to understand why and how transgender, or “Hijras” in Bangladesh are being separated and alienated from the mainstream society. From this reality, the fundamental question is how transgender, or “Hijra” people will have their fundamental rights in Bangladesh. Therefore, this article looks at some valid research questions:

- (a) Why transgenders, or “Hijras” in Bangladesh are deprived of their fundamental civic and human rights?
- (b) What was the role of the Government of Bangladesh in ensuring transgenders, or Hijras’ civic protection and rights in Bangladesh?
- (c) What should have been done to protect transgenders or the “Hijra” population’s civil rights in Bangladesh?

Theoretical Framework

Social science researchers continue to analyze Marx’s most influential alienation and social class theory. In 1844, Karl Marx generated a theoretical notion of social alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, where Marx discussed the knowledge of individuals or groups that are detached from the values, norms, practices, and social relations of their community or society (Stryker, 1998; Silver, 2019; Crossman, 2020). Marx commented on this alienation as an isolating, dehumanizing, and disenchanting outcome of working within a capitalist mode of production with four factors of social alienation: (a) alienation from the product, (b) alienation from the activity of labor, (c) alienation from one’s specific humanity and (d) alienation from society. Marx’s four factors of social

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alienation reflect the socioeconomic status of transgender in Bangladesh. They are socially excluded (Khan et al., 2009) from property rights, family relations, voting rights, passports, educational certificates, citizenship, or social approval (Sifat & Shafi, 2021; Khan et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, alienation is controversial within Marxist theory due to its reputation as an ideological, pre-scientific, and romantic concept. Arguably, the central problem that any new formulation of Marxist class theory must face is economics. Scholarly work has also revealed that Marxian economics is well-established within theoretical sociology. However, to some extent, this alienation theory generates considerable scholarly debate, but our purpose in this article is not to re-ignite the debate. Instead, we aim to focus on how Marx's alienation theory addresses the current dilemma of the transgender, or "Hijra" population in Bangladesh, a small, marginalized population continuously alienated from the mainstream community (Oversveen & Kelly, 2023).

According to Oversveen and Kelly (2023), attitudes towards social class can be divided into two broad categories. Empirical approaches distinguish between social classes based on observed inequalities in income, wealth, education, political consciousness, or other indicators. In contrast, structural accounts define a class in terms of the structure of society (Cohen, 2000 [1978]: 73, cited in Oversveen & Kelly, 2023: 321). However, what we understand about empirical methods is that it refers to obtain-

ing knowledge, information, or evidence through direct observation, experimentation, or data collection in the real world. These approaches are based on empiricism, emphasizing the importance of relying on observable and measurable data to formulate and test hypotheses and draw conclusions. Therefore, understanding the class that we wish to develop belongs to the latter category, i.e., it does not attempt to describe any truly existing hierarchical order but – in line with Marx's project – to uncover the standard features held common to all capitalist societies, in contrast to the traditional exposition of class theory, which usually begins with property distribution.

Transgender people often face economic discrimination, including high unemployment, poverty, and wage gaps.

Again, Marx's economic alienation theory highlights how workers in a capitalist system can be alienated from the product of their labor and the means of production. Therefore, at least if it is not directly related to capitalism and its mode of production, nevertheless, economic isolation may parallel the economic challenges faced by transgender people in Bangladesh due to the segregation and low level of economic scope for their better livelihoods (Silver, 2019). Our investigation through scholarly work suggests that transgender people often face economic discrimination, including high unemployment, poverty, and wage gaps. They may not get formal job opportunities or

training to start their businesses. This disparity results from workplace discrimination and limited access to work opportunities. Transgender workers may experience a sense of isolation from the economic system as they struggle to secure stable employment and financial stability (Aziz & Azhar, 2019; Bhattacharjee et al., 2020; Al-Mamun et al., 2022). Moreover, alienation happens when workers often face discrimination in the workplace, including hiring bias, unequal pay, and lack of opportunities for career advancement. This discrimination in the workplace can lead to labor alienation, where transgender workers feel isolated from their labor and workplace environment.

Marx's theory underscores the social and psychological effects of alienation. Transgender people may experience social isolation due to stigma, rejection, and isolation. Studies have documented the social exclusion, discrimination, and violence that transgender people face, contributing to feelings of alienation and marginalization from society. In Marx's theory, "species-being" represents the essential nature of man. Transgender individuals may lose their authentic self and personal identity due to social pressure to conform to gender norms. This loss of authenticity can contribute to feelings of alienation and disconnection from their true self (see also Wartenberg, 1982; Wesp et al., 2019). In 1959, sociologist Melvin Seeman illustrated social alienation with four attributes (powerlessness, meaninglessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement). Economic instability and social upheaval foster social isolation. In institutions and societies domi-

nated by cisgender and capitalist people, they will find less obligation to implement transgender or "Hijra's" rights. As a result, a small group of transgenders, or the "Hijra" population, is under severe threat of alienation from mainstream society in Bangladesh.

Transgender: Who Are They?

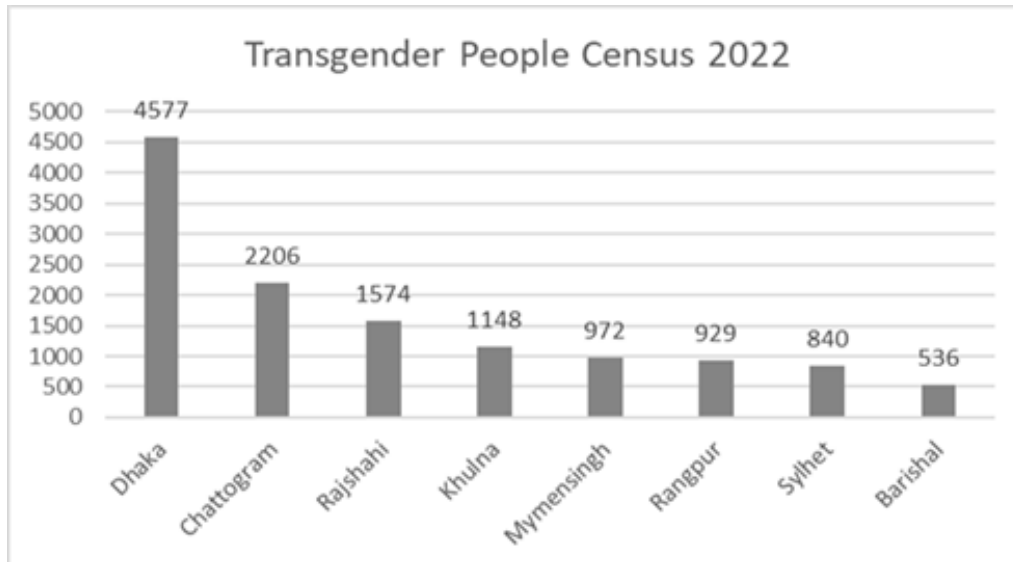
The United Nations (UN), World Health Organisation (WHO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), European Union (EU), human rights organizations and other international NGOs have shown a steady concern about the rights of LGBTQ. LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. Transgender people are identified by their gender expression (Jourian, 2015). As an umbrella term, transgender is used to signify people whose gender identification or expression differs from the culturally prescribed gender associated with their allocated birth sex (i.e., male or female) (Davidson, 2007; Valentine, 2007; Head, 2020). Transgender means the "female psyche in the male physique" (Khan et al., 2009: 444). Afif (2019:186), asserted, "Transgender is the people with gender identical problem". According to Alipour (2017: 92), "the modern term transgender describes both women and men who feel trapped in the wrong bodies and may decide to change their bodies through sex-reassignment surgeries". According to Stryker and Whittle (2006: 4), "Transgender people are those who permanently changed their social gender through the public presentation of self without recourse of genital transformation".

Characteristics, Socio-economic Conditions, and the Legal Framework of Transgender People in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the name Hijras is mostly used as derogatory. There are various varieties of Hijras living in Bangladesh: (a) Koti, the man appears to be a Hijra; (b) Chibri, the woman appears to be a

Hijra; (c) Khoja, those who offered their male genitalia as sacrifices, and (d) Akua: primarily males and transgender individuals who pose as Hijra (Daize & Masnun, 2019). Approximately 12,629 transgender people were found in the National Census (2022) in Bangladesh. Fig. 1 shows the total number of transgender people in eight divisions of Bangladesh (see also The Business Standard, 2022).

Fig. 1 Number of Transgender People in Eight Divisions of Bangladesh



Source: TBS (2022)

Hijras in Bangladesh face multiple social, cultural, economic, and political hindrances that contribute to the communities' increased support from the society. Many have encountered heart-breaking discrimination and intolerance due to their sexual orientation. No Bangladesh's anti-discrimination laws cover the rights of sexual minorities or recognize gender diversity (Nag, 1995). In any sturdy socio-political context, hijras are unfit to conduct distinguished human lives. Hijras

in Bangladesh cannot take advantage of the country's traditional social structures and institutions. Every developmental phase disregards their fundamental rights and social acceptability. According to Al-Mamun et al. (2022), the Hijra lifestyle exemplifies gender-based social exclusion and indicates that gender is not being addressed as part of a more complete social exclusion. Jahan (2023) argues that despite receiving legal recognition, members of the Hijra community still

experience discrimination and harassment in areas including jobs, housing, and education (see also Hyder & Rasel, 2019).

Transgender people were declared as the third gender in November 2013 by the GOB, and on 26 January 2014, a gazette on this (Hossen, 2019). Nevertheless, still, there is no specific legal law to protect their rights. On the other hand, Section 377 (where homosexuality is illegal) violates their sexual rights (Khan et al., 2009; Aziz & Azhar, 2019; Islam, 2019). In addition, according to a report on the *New Age*, the election commission did not add the numbers of the third gender in the 2016 Updated voter list (Aziz & Azhar, 2019). So, they still do not have any voting rights (Sifat, 2020). Among many positive steps toward transgender people's development (e.g., Islam, 2019), the government provides only a 600-taka stipend to disabled transgender, which is very low and inadequate support. However, most do not get that (Ahmed & Sifat, 2021).

Socially, politically, and economically, they have no specific rights. Most of them have low education. Hossen's (2019) research found that 71 percent only completed primary education, with a small percentage of higher education. There are two main reasons behind this lower percentage: most came from poor, superstitious family backgrounds, and their acquaintances have never accepted them. Moreover, our research shows that they constantly face bullying and harassment by classmates and teachers (Jebin, 2018). Researchers (Anjum et al., 2021;

Khanam, 2021) depict that Bangladesh is competent in positive reforms by allowing them to work and upgrade "Hijra" minorities. Anjum et al. (2021) recommended segregated educational institutions for third-gender people for their higher education (see also Islam, 2016).

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From the beginning of their life, they understand there is no space for them in this society. After revealing their identity, most of them were forced to leave their family and started living on roadsides, in slums, in parks, and rental houses. Islam (2016) found that the third transgender, or "Hijras", mostly remains outside of Bangladesh's educational system. Unfortunately, however, their current existence is limited to abject poverty, ignorance, animosity, and derision. The Hijras continue to live under constant threat of being denied their fundamental rights to equality and education (see also Farhan, 2012).

Hossen (2019) found that most transgender people live in slums. Most of their slums are in Ganderia, Shampur, Mogbazzar, Nobi Nagor, Savar, and Posthokhola beside Burigonga River, Method Potty (Cleaning Class) beside Boldha Garden, Method Potty (Cleaning Class) beside Rajdhani Supermarket. No one wanted to accommodate them either because of their gender identity or because they had no proper jobs. So, they

have no choice but to live under their “*Guruma*”. However, most transgenders confessed that they are less secure and more controlled or abused mentally, physically even sexually by their “*Guruma*” (Habib, 2013; Sifat & Shafi, 2021). While transgender, or “Hijra” people live under the “*Guruma*” as “*Chelas*” or followers, they must follow all the rules and are not allowed to disobey their guru or leave the community (Hossen, 2019). At some points, they face the death penalty if they break or want to leave the community (Sifat & Shafi, 2021).

A report was published in *The Asian Age* (2016), where a transgender woman (Sejuti) was tried to kill by her leaders. There are different leaders in different areas. Sometimes, there is conflict among transgender zones in collecting money from streets or other places (Shifullah & Mahamud, 2016). As they do not have any proper job, they are mainly involved with informal work like “*Badhai*” (singing or dancing at a wedding or giving blessings to the newborn baby), *Bazar tola* (collecting money from the market), begging for money by harassing people or sex work to manage their livelihood (Hossen, 2019). According to the report of Independent.com (2019), most of them collect money from Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh and its busy metropolitan areas, such as Farmgate, Paltan, Motijheel, Dhanmondi, Agargaon, Mirpur, Bijoy Sarani, Gulistan, Moghbazar, and Kakrail. Their average monthly income is 12000-15000, and there are no specific opportunities for them to apply for government jobs as a minority.

Conversely, private companies do not want to hire them because of their feminine behavior (Hossen, 2019). Chan and Khan (2007) conducted a study where 99 percent of transgender people related to sex work, and only 17 percent used condoms. Transgender people in Bangladesh are at high risk of HIV (Azim et al., 2008). Because of social discrimination, no legal support, and lack of family support, they suffer from extreme mental disorders (Sifat, 2020). Transgender people live in a different world, separated from mainstream society. Their community has a hierarchical system (Hossen, 2019). They cannot attend family functions like relatives’ weddings or their fathers’ funerals. Most transgender lead a very miserable life in their old age. There is limited support from the government and the NGOs for them. Their misery will not end even after their death. According to Josim (2012), the hijra community living in mainstream society does not have access to fundamental rights like housing. They do not get any “*Janazah*” prayer (obligated funeral prayer for a deceased Muslim) for the end or get a proper burial (Ahmed & Sifat, 2021).

Several studies identified that transgender, or “Hijras”, are vulnerable due to low knowledge of health matters. Therefore, they can easily be exposed to HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) (Johnston, 2009). Almost all of them do not know about the existence of HIV infection. The situation worsens when they seek help from doctors for their sexual problems; they hardly get any help from hospital doctors (Aziz

& Azhar, 2019; Ahmed & Sifat, 2021). They often avoid seeking help at the clinic (Chan & Khan, 2007). Even when admitted to a hospital, they can wait longer than usual and have no fixed lines. Both male and female lines exist and are invoked in both. Also, people feel uncomfortable around them, give them creepy looks, and try to ignore their presence. They face rude behavior from medical assistants and doctors, which makes them uncomfortable visiting hospitals in the future (Ahmed & Sifat, 2021; Sifat & Shafi, 2021).

They feel uncomfortable and frightened to provide them with any medical help they deserve.

In another study, Rana et al. (2018) found that 73 percent of transgender individuals seek primary advice regarding their health issues from the pharmacy and buy unprescribed medication, even for severe health conditions. Khan et al. (2009) discovered that most doctors had minimal knowledge regarding transgender sexuality, mental issues, and culture. Therefore, they feel uncomfortable and frightened to provide them with any medical help they deserve. They also discovered that transgender people suffer immense psychological and physical illnesses as they go through a highly vulnerable situation and are excluded from society and the community. On the other hand, doctors and other medical professionals fear treating transgender, or “Hijras”, properly; thus, they refuse to provide adequate care (see Aziz & Azhar, 2019).

Transgender, or “Hijra’s” Rights in Bangladesh

Transgender rights and freedoms are addressed in Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” However, in Bangladesh, the UDHR is not well respected and enforced (Uddin, 2018). Hyder and Rasel (2019) noted that Bangladesh has some responsibilities to safeguard transgender rights according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Similarly, Islam (2019) states that the Bangladeshi constitution guarantees all citizens’ fundamental rights, so transgender, or “Hijras”, have equal rights to men and women. However, they are often divested of property, employment, education, health care, and other fundamental rights. Islam (2016) mentioned enlightening the mass people about transgender, or “Hijras”, rights and the necessity of their education with respect and dignity, which is essential in Bangladesh.

Amanullah et al. (2022) designated six human rights violation indicators (economic, employment, health, education, social and civic, and political rights) of transgender, or “Hijras” in Bangladesh, classified from binary aspects. The six human rights violations were estimated

Six human rights violation indicators (economic, employment, health, education, social and civic, and political rights) of transgender, or “Hijras” in Bangladesh.

using univariate and multivariate logistic regression. The authors discovered that two-thirds of the transgender, or “Hijras” community denoted their violated economic rights, and more than half reported the infringement of their political and educational rights. Bisexual “Hijras” conveyed economic rights violations, while transgender, or “Hijras”, earned more than 10,000 Bangladesh Taka report of violated educational and political rights. Despite Bangladesh being a signatory to the UDHR, the continuous violations of the transgender, or “Hijras”, civic and human rights portray the Bangladesh Government’s failure to meet the UN SDGs (1, 4, 5, 8, and 10) of adequate access to education, inequality, poverty reduction, gender equality, and economic growth among the Hijra community. Due to a lack of recognition of society and the implementation of existing laws and policies by the government, the third gender is treated inhumanly. Khanam (2021) states that the government, NGOs, and private sectors should consider gender identity and the social and legal rights of the Hijra community.

Chakkuni and Raj (2020) pointed out some push and pull factors that nudged transgender people to migrate to the region to locate work and earn a living. Push factors (financial insecurity, unemployment, restricted opportunities, prejudice,

poverty, insult, and lack of honour) have mainly propelled them to vacate their places of birth. Pull factors (security emotions, career options, different jobs, better employment prospects, better wages, better living situations, patience, and individual liberty) have seduced and allowed them to live in the city. Now, the question to scholars as they evaluate the situation deeply about the transgender, or “Hijra” population’s livelihoods in Bangladesh along with the political, social, civic and human rights, the article in the following sections draws some recommendations after critical discussion.

Critical Discussion

Transgender, or “Hijra” people are being alienated in Bangladesh as they are treated inhumanely and do not have fundamental civic and human rights. They have been marginalized and continuously alienated from the mainstream community or the nation. Transgender, or “Hijra” people are severely stigmatized, nevertheless, they face extreme hardship due to low income or any social facilities from the Government of Bangladesh (Ahmed & Sifat, 2021; Uddin, 2022). Transgender, or “Hijra” people have limited access to, for example, medical and testing installations in Bangladesh.

The Constitution of Bangladesh (Article 28[1] protects the rights of the people by declaring that the state shall not discriminate against its citizens based on religion, caste, caste, or sex. If this is the case, then the Government of Bangladesh does not require to acknowledge transgenders or “Hijras”

separately because they all are Bangladeshi citizens, and they should have access to all national and social services accordingly. However, it is regrettable that third-gender people in Bangladesh are excluded from fundamental rights related to citizenship, such as property rights, inheritance, health, education, and employment opportunities, due to a lack of proper laws and enforcement (see also Jebin, 2018).

The government's *Ashrayan2* (shelter2) project notably targeted the "Hijra" population to rehabilitate them by providing housing and job opportunities. As far as sheltering them and including them in income-generating activities, are concerned the Hatikumrul and Manab Palli Ashrayan projects have been incredibly effective (Jahan, 2023). However, the process is slow (Rahman & Irani, 2022).

It is the proclamation of the state to apprise each person, but the state has failed to educate each "Hijra" as consecrated in the constitution of Bangladesh. Between 2012 and 2013, the Ministry of Social Welfare framed a policy for the educational development of the "Hijra" community and specified it in section 9 (subsection 1.5). According to the Bandhu Social Welfare Society (2015), the Directorate Office of Social Welfare surveyed the "Hijra". It included scholarships provided to the Hijra students to appear for various levels of study; however, in the country's current economic recession, it is just a mockery for them because, with this money, they cannot manage even their one-day livelihood.

In Bangladesh, trans people are powerless, meaningless, socially excluded, and estranged from the mainstream community. The study focuses on the lives of transgender of Bangladesh. Legal protection and rights of the transgender, or "Hijra" population are essential in Bangladesh. Inadequate legal advocacy for legal protection against discrimination and violence based on gender identity and expression of the transgender, or "Hijra" population has made their lives more vulnerable. Our research shows that it is time for the Bangladesh government to push for transgender-inclusive anti-discrimination laws and policies. In this way, it can be ensured that transgender people have early access to legal gender recognition and official identification documents that match their gender identity.

It is time for the Bangladesh government to push for transgender-inclusive anti-discrimination laws and policies.

Our research also suggests that changing the legal framework for them will not be enough if the Bangladesh Government lacks adequate education and awareness programs imposed on the mainstream community to change their perceptions of the transgender, or "Hijra" population in Bangladesh. It must implement awareness campaigns to challenge stigma and misconceptions about transgender, or "Hijra" people. Promoting gender sensitivity and transgender, or "Hijra" inclusion in schools and workplaces is also an essential policy that the Bangladesh Government should consider immediately.

The current study provided an overview of how social, cultural, political, and economic variables marginalize individuals who identify as Transgender, or “Hijra”. Therefore, the current research investigates through the interpretations of social alienation theory how the transgender or “Hijra” population in Bangladesh is alienated from mainstream society. The study depicts some policy recommendations to protect the transgenders’ fundamental rights in Bangladesh with the support of many national and international NGOs. To ensure transgender or hijra people’s human rights, the Government of Bangladesh must respect the UN, WHO, UNICEF, and ILO conventions. Moreover, the Bangladesh Government also should establish substantial policies with the support of other national and international NGOs and human rights organizations. It should ensure transgender or “Hijra” population in Bangladesh is well-protected and can maintain a better livelihood. Otherwise, this group of people will be continuously alienated from society.

Directions for further research

Considerable research gaps about the third gender need to be filled in Bangladesh. Primary ethnographic data are needed to understand the real-life experiences of the transgender, or “Hijra”, population in Bangladesh. To reduce knowledge gaps, potential social-science researchers should conduct empirical case studies in which several FGDs and policy makers’ interviews will be helpful to understand what the actual condition of transgender is, or “Hijras” in Bangladesh,

and how the current miserable status quo could have been changed.

Conclusions

This study shows that transgender people in Bangladesh are treated inhumanely due to socio-cultural norms. Marx’s four factors of social alienation reflect the socioeconomic status of transgender in Bangladesh. They are among the most disempowered and poorest to access primary education, health care facilities, and employment opportunities due to their gender identity. No special wards or counters are set aside in hospitals for “Hijras”. However, transgender, or “Hijras”, are citizens of Bangladesh; they have equal rights like every other man and woman in this country. To improve the lives of transgender people in Bangladesh through formal recognition would be insufficient to bring about the necessary changes to justify discrete efforts taken by the government or NGOs. Bangladesh Government should pay more attention to the rights of transgender people. National and international organizations have raised their voice against discrimination of the third gender worldwide. Nevertheless, still a long way to go.

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