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**TRANSGENDER YOUTH: CHALLENGES,
DISCRIMINATIONS AND SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS**
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Abstract:

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose self-identification or gender expression transcends society's constructed established gender categories or who do not conform to the culturally defined norms of their biological sex (Green, 2004). Transgender youth in India face a variety of issues. It is easy to discriminate against, viewing as deviant, marginal, or inferior, such groups that are not part of the mainstream. This paper aims to describe the Challenges related to Social Respect and Recognition from Society by Transgender youth in Chennai and to explore Social Work Intervention to overcome the challenges of the Transgender youth in Chennai. The researcher has adopted Descriptive cum Diagnostic Research Design to this study. The researcher adopted the Snowball sampling method for this study. The total sample size was 120. The findings and recommendations will be very fruitful to enable the lives of the transgender youth and the institutions working for their wellbeing.

Key Words: Transgender, Youth, Discriminations and Social Work

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INTRODUCTION

In today's society, there are many social norms that people are expected to live by. But with every social norm, there is a group of individuals who challenge those social norms. With every broken social norm, comes a great deal of danger, dangers of discrimination, physical violence, and segregation. One group that suffers from discrimination is transgendered youth. The main problems that are being faced by the transgender youth are of social challenges, discrimination, unemployment, lack of educational facilities, homelessness, physical violence, undue stereotypes, lack of medical facilities like HIV care and hygiene, depression, hormone pill abuse, tobacco and alcohol abuse and problems related to marriage and adoption. This research paper describes the various challenges and discriminations faced by Transgender youth and explore suitable Social Work implications to overcome such challenges.

TRANSGENDER YOUTH

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose self-identification or gender expression transcends society's constructed established gender categories or who do not conform to the culturally defined norms of their biological sex (Green, 2004). Transgender youth are individuals of any age or sex whose appearance, personal characteristics, or

behaviors differ from stereotypes about how men and women are "supposed" to be. Transgender youth exist in every culture, race, and class since the story of human life has been recorded. Only the term "transgender" and the medical technology available to transsexual people are new. In its broadest sense, transgender encompasses anyone whose identity or behaviour falls outside of stereotypical gender norms.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Transgenders community is one of the most marginalized sections of the society in the country. Many Transgenders living in Chennai are facing various challenges such as lack of understanding from family, friends, employers, medical professional and others, difficulty in finding work or retaining work once their background becomes known to others, rejection by family members, transphobic comments, violent intimidation on the streets and outside their homes, being stared at or laughed at when out shopping, bullying and name calling. Even more issues like they have conflicted and confused feelings, may too experience feeling of depression, suicide or self-harm. Facing possible rejection and even violence, transgender people must continue coming out to friends, family, co-workers and community members so that they can, in turn, become more accepting and supportive. After identifying all problems and issues faced by transgender youth,

the researcher formulated the topic, to study the challenges and discriminations faced by Transgender youth in Chennai.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Transgender youth in India face a variety of issues. It is easy to discriminate against, viewing as deviant, marginal, or inferior, such groups that are not part of the mainstream. Those who are classified as such become part of an invisible minority, a group whose achievements are kept hidden and unknown from those in the dominant culture. Stereotyping, blaming the victim, distortion of reality, can even lead the person to feel to feel as though they deserve the oppression that they experience. Other elements of oppression include isolation, self-hatred, underachievement or overachievement, substance abuse, problems with relationships, and a variety of other mental health matters. The basic human rights are curtailed for them since they are considered as the other gender. There is a need for talking measures in order to overcome all the challenges, discriminations and mental health problems faced by Transgender youth. Thus the research is very essential and need of the hour. It is of utmost importance that the transgender youth are made free from violence and discrimination from society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the Challenges related to Social Respect and Recognition

from Society by Transgender youth in Chennai.

- To identify the various Discriminations found against Transgenders in the family and society
- To know the Mental Health Problems of Transgender youth.
- To explore Social Work Intervention to overcome the challenges of the Transgender youth in Chennai.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher made an attempt to deal on the main problems of gender identity, gender expression, challenges, discrimination and mental health problems of Transgender youth in Chennai. The researcher has adopted Descriptive cum Diagnostic Research Design to this study. The Researcher conducted the Pilot study. After referring many studies and reviews the researcher had a visit to the target group to explore the feasibility of the study. The pre-test was conducted with 20 transgender youth to have correct approach to respondents and avoid unwanted misunderstanding and troubles. Interview Schedule as a quantitative tool for the data collection. The researcher having studied the living conditions of Transgenders and had tie up with the NGOs. The researcher started to choose the respondent from NGOs working for the welfare of the Transgender youth and then collected data. The researcher adopted the Snowball Sampling method for this study. The total sample size was 120. The researcher used the statistical

package of social sciences (SPSS) for the data analysis. The researcher applied Chi-Square test and ANOVA to test the hypotheses.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the researcher had studied and discussed on various social challenges, discrimination and mental health problems of Transgenders in detail. The main objectives are discussed in detail. Generally, majority of the Transgenders inferred in this research is in the age group of 21- 40. They associate with those of their own age group and resort to group living separated from all the challenges and discriminations imposed by the society. More number of the transgenders have studied upto middle and high school. They could not continue to their studies due to the discrimination and rejection they faced from their families and society. They are unmarried because no male one is willing to marry the transgendered people because they will not suitable for family life. In this research most of the transgenders belong to Schedule Caste/ Schedule Tribe background. This is because of the existence of levels of discrimination and rejection directed towards their vulnerable group. We can also conclude the one's lifestyle can't be predicted on the basis of caste. Transgendered people are found in all the castes.

India is basically a Hindu country and the population of those belonging to the Hindu Religion. This is the reason why the majority of the respondents are Hindu. In society, there is a social stigma

attached to having transgenders living in one's family. So transgenders start living with other transgendered people. After completion of their diploma courses they are placed as program manager, field officer, co-ordinator, counselor, and so on. Begging and sex work have become the major source of sustenance for nearly half of transgenders g women. In December 2006, the Tamil Nadu state government passed an order saying that no educational institute or government organisation could discriminate against someone on the basis of them being a transgendered person. With regard to Spouse occupation, no transgender is willing to disclose information pertaining to their spouse's occupation. The reason behind this may be that they are not living with their spouses. Also they have been conditioned to be worried about personal matters that lead to societal fear or fear of stigma.

In today's digital world practically everyone has access to a mobile phone. The same trend is prevalent even among transgenders in this study. Transgender use mobile phones for their personal contact and for entertainment programmes. Transgenders mostly don't have social network account. This is probably due to lack of awareness and interest (feel it is a waste of time) in social networking. Grossman A.H (2007) designed to probe transgender youths' experiences of vulnerability in the areas of health and mental health. This involved their exposure to risks, discrimination, marginalization, and their access to supportive resources. Though Indian Constitution provides rights and duties to every people, majority of the

population avoid adhering to it. The Constitution provides for the fundamental right to equality, and tolerates no discrimination on the grounds of sex, caste, creed or religion. The Constitution also guarantees political rights and other benefits to every citizen. In this study exhibits that differences exist and society looks at transgenders differently and even fails to consider them as their own fellow beings.

Usually Transgendered people get help from the public for their daily living. When one sees them in the trains, bus stop, market places, he/she has to make them understand that they are respected. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights", They also include rights which allow people to live with dignity such as equal pay for equal work, education, right to health, wellbeing, food, water, housing and medical care (Wikin, 1998). In this study, the researcher could find that majority of the respondents receive recognition from Non - Governmental Organizations – mutual support and acceptance are given to them. In Chennai there are many Non - Governmental Organizations which promote the welfare of the transgenders. With regard to Recognition from Transgender Association, this study reveals that the majority of the respondents are receiving recognition from Transgender Association. They become members of these associations and participate in all their programmes and are beneficiaries of their favours too. Benefits like (free sex-reassignment surgeries and income generation scheme) are to be regulated.

Gender identity and presentation are popular topics within many fields of study, but few discuss the violence and discrimination experienced by those who do not fit within traditional gender norms. They include intersexed persons, transsexuals, cross-dressers/transvestites, and others who in one way or another do not conform to traditional gender norms. Experience demonstrates that this attention is rarely friendly; rather. It often takes the form of hate and violence; as Herek (1990) pointed out, "the importance of gender-nonconformity remains relatively unchanged; people who transgress gender roles remain at the low end of the hierarchy of acceptability." The purpose of this study was to examine transgendered people's experience of violence and harassment as an initial attempt at establishing the scope of the problem. In this study, Gender disparity and discrimination against transgendered people are prevalent. The fight for getting voter id and recognition for status as a member of citizens is going on. One of the fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution is freedom of speech. This should not be denied to anyone. More number of the respondents getting opportunities to raise questions and make use of them for the right purpose. In this study, it is found that the majority of the respondents are of the view that due to gender identity and rejection/insults in the family and they do not wish to visit them and they are unable to forget some ignominious incidents.

Transgenders experience avoidance by relatives due to reasons like family

welfare, social insecurity and status. Some are included to a small extent in their family functions. In rare cases transgenders receive getting help from others in different level. No human beings live on earth without the support of their fellow human beings. So also transgenders require help from others. Transgender people have been found to be more likely to have problems with debts and paying bills than others and to think that their gender identity is related to these problems than others (Lombadi, 2001). In this research also transgenders face mighty problems of having debts and not having sufficient money for their basic needs. However, the majority of the respondents experience, like operations they need large amounts of money and in such situations they face lack of financial support. Relatives and friends do not wish to visit them due to gender identity and social stigma dominates them. Some get relatives visits born out of concern.

With regard to receiving poorer service in restaurant, this study exhibits that they are treated with poorer service either daily, once or twice a week or couple of times. In the society everybody desires to receive respect and good treatment. In the case of transgendered people, gender, status and standard of living are some of the reasons behind the poorer service accorded to them in restaurants. Generally, people instantly start to think about funny names to call people and is generated just to start mentally mock a person. Due to their gender variant and their behavioural changes exist in the society, accompany adolescence and continued into later stages of their lives.

Usual misconception prevails in the minds of the people that transgenders are not equal to them and consider they are prevented from using rest room. Mostly, they are punished due to misunderstandings, dressing and acting too feminine.

It is reported that nearly half of the respondents experienced verbal and physical harassment at work and some also experienced verbal abuse and threatening behavior or physical abuse. In this research the researcher inferred that they are very often insulted verbally, physically and sexually. Mostly, this group is considered as vulnerable and neglected group. The difference in physical appearance becomes apparent, parents and teachers tend to show less interest in educating them. Since, this type of gender often involved in begging, sex work and are found on the roads they are forced to fight or defend themselves in suspense. The importance of education is well known and everyone wishes to educate their children. Educational support is provided by their parents and care takers in order to raise their children eligibility in society. Reservations in schools and colleges are not applicable to them nor priority given to them in working place. Educational institutions are hesitant to enroll them (Keogh, 2006). In this research it is found that majority of the transgenders lack educational facilities. Educational institutions hesitate mostly to enroll them. Medical support is given for simple treatment and for small operation whereas it is very difficult to get medical support for genital reassignment surgery.

If one wants they have to follow all the legal steps of government.

The feeling of gender of oppression varies from society to society, and group to group. In India, with regard gender oppression is easily identified and taken great measures to remove from society. Transgenders feel proud and happy in accepting their life and remain always in group. Due to some challenges from society still they are rigid and feel proud. No isolated human being can have a balanced state of life because we are dependent beings. Human beings are dependent and normally get help from other people. In this regard of getting emotional support from parents and close ones are highly necessary and remain as big challenge to transgenders. Transgender healthcare needs may relate to experiences of isolation, discrimination and transphobia. These experiences place many trans people at risk of alcohol abuse, depression, despair, anxiety, suicide, self-harm, violence and substance abuse. In this research also the result is found similar. They are mostly wounded and hurt for different reasons by society. For certain times they find it hard to respond to it but later on once they are fed up they feel sad but don't express it for different reasons. Many experience anxiety, attitudes of intolerance, depression, despair, hatred due to heated argument, punishment, loss of close ones and calamities. There is another component transgenders feel anger towards close ones and society. It is because lack of love, care, support, lack of respect, recognition, and inability to avail

governmental schemes, policies and benefits.

The researcher in this research could find the similar result of trans people having experience of setbacks and difficulties from society related to their health and social care. While demanding for citizenship, respect and recognition from society get failure and look eagerly for better opportunities. This is common among unorganized groups. The members of this type of community always want to fulfill their own wishes and desires. While seeking to do this they are neglected by their own friends and sometimes seek to take revenges on them. They have much leisure time and many friends to share joys and sorrows. They share during group activities and in the seminars and cultural programmes. Hines (2007) studied support and care networks within their own family. Trans reciprocated support and help received from their own family members will improve their quality of life. Family support brings everything to a person. If one is receive good support from the family his/ her life will be defined and happy. This research points out that transgenders family support and respect is highly lacking and they eagerly look for good relating and inclusion as members of the family.

Trans people mostly like to involve in recreational activities like listening music, reading newspaper, watching movies. Music gives great pleasure to release unwanted tensions and create some interest to the listener. In the case of transgenders, they always listen to music

and relax when they are tensed. They also too sing along while listening to music. Newspaper provides information on the daily happenings in the world. It brings to notice of all aspects of one's life. The transgendered people read the news to updating their knowledge and to know what is happening around them. Newspaper also provides them with information on the current status of government decisions (Whittle 2007). In this research, trans mostly enjoy while listening music, gather new information while reading newspaper, Release their tensions during the time of watching movies. Reading books helps to one gain knowledge in various fields. Most of transgenders read books like magazines and novels. They share the books read among themselves and even share the knowledge they gain from books. Watching movies and listening songs to create different outlook and produce creativity in one's life. Media plays a vital role in capturing the mind of the people. Transgenders watch movies in order to entertain themselves and use the dialogues and the dressing they observe in process in their day to day life.

Yoga meditation brings creates a pleasant state of life. In the case of transgendered people fully occupied with their own personal works and most of them do not know the importance of yoga meditation. From a psychological counseling perspective, resilience is the capacity to cope with adversity, stress, and other negative events as well as the capacity to avoid psychological problems while experiencing difficult circumstances (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000).

Tansgenders felt very helpful attending psychological counseling. It is because one is provided with good guidance and moral support to lead a balanced lifestyle. Some of them are not aware of psychological counseling and awareness needs to be created in this regard. Chatting with friends plays vital role in sharing messages with contemporaries. In the transgendered community it is found of chatting with friends takes place within the community but not with others. Some transgenders chat with friends for the right purpose. Relation of awareness is very necessary in this regard. There are many awareness programme on mental health conducted now a days. if they come for any treatment, parent to children medical services are tested. Information and good guidance are given differently and attractive methods are followed. The transgendered community has partial knowledge on availability of mental health services and still more new and creative programmes are needed to be conducted.

RESULT OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

In the association between the Age and Social Respect of the respondents, P value (0.250) is greater than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There are 48.2 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 31- 40 years who receive social respect from the people. This is the age group found working as programme manager, field officer and other coordinators. Chi square also establishes that there is no significant association between age and social respect. In the

association between the age and opportunity to raise questions, the P value (0.028) is lesser than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is significant association between the age and opportunity to raise questions. Those who are above 41 years get opportunities to raise questions in large extent.

In the association between education and mental health awareness of the respondents, P value (0.049) is lesser than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is rejected at 5 point level of significance. There is significant association between education and mental health awareness of the respondents. The transgendered people, mostly lack of knowledge on mental health services, they always look for immediate support any circumstances in their life. So this study reveals that mental health services are highly expected over. In the association between the age and while sharing joys and sorrows people, P value (0.729) is greater than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is no significant association between the age and while sharing joys and sorrows with someone. Mutual trust and confidence are not maintained properly. They strongly depend on friends for sharing joys and never showed less interest to listen to their own group members.

In the association between the age and psychological counseling received by the transgendered community, the P value (0.846) is greater than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of

significance. There is no significant association between the age and psychological counseling received by the transgendered community. We find lot of problems exists in transgendered people. They find psychological counseling helps them to ventilate all their worries and tensions. In the association between the Education and Rejection of job opportunities to transgendered community, the P value (0.240) is greater than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is no significant association between Education and Rejection of job opportunities to transgendered community. Lack of respect, recognition and opportunities transgendered people are not placed for any job.

In the association between the Education and feeling of depression, the P value (0.041) is lesser than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is significant association between the Education and Feeling of Depression. Transgenders easily, get into problems due to gender identity, social challenges and discrimination. In the association between the education and opportunities to raise questions, the P value (0.953) is greater than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is no significant association between education and opportunities to raise questions. Transgenders always remain with high expectations of getting favours and support from government and organizations. But they fail to get. So there raise questions for and against the

living condition of transgenders. In the association between the education and attending social functions, the P value (0.939) is greater than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is no significant association between education and attending social functions. They are mostly neglected and shown less respect during the social functions. Some of them even face hell of problems while attending social functions.

In the association between income age job opportunities of the respondents, the .P value (0.033) is lesser than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is significant association between income and job opportunities of the respondents. It starts from adolescent age onwards. They mostly involved in begging and commercial sex work in order to sustain life. In the association between the age and feeling depression of the respondents, the P value (0.666) is greater than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is no significant association between the age and feeling depression of the respondents. Every number of the transgenders had feeling of depression due to their bitter experiences they face daily in their life. In the association between education and attitudes of intolerance of the respondents, the P value (0.022) is lesser than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is accepted at 5 point level of significance. There is significant association between education and attitudes of intolerance of the

respondents. Attitude of intolerance developed after having bitter experiences in one's life. So the transgendered people adjust themselves for many unpleasant happenings. Sometimes they too lack temper sometimes and finally develop an attitude of intolerance.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- In this research, majority of the respondents experience gender diversion. So there is a great need to understand and to accept fact that the humans are diverse. Transgenders have the right to be what they are and what they want to be. Providers must understand the needs of the transgender community. Full rights on the levels of society and full voice in the struggles for liberation of all oppressed peoples are noted properly.
- It is found that negative attitudes towards Transgender people calling derogatory names by non-trans people. Negative attitudes towards transgender people are becoming more common. Transgender people experience transphobia and discrimination in all aspects of life. Many more researches, seminar and awareness programmes required to better understand attitudes towards transgender people.
- More number of the respondents felt state of homelessness. Transgender people experience particular problems with regards to housing. They stay in a rented house and find

difficult in paying rental charges. People hesitate in giving houses to them. Many more steps and initiatives are to be taken by government specially the housing needs of the people.

- The researcher in this research found that less important is given for education. More number of the respondents lack educational facilities. Transgender people are educated very less and there is discontinuity exist in their life. Transgender people's experience in school is very limited. This is because they experience bullying in school and identify this is an area worthily of further investigation. Insurance companies must understand the importance of hormonal therapy and the need for hormonal coverage.
- It is found that more number of the respondents working below their capabilities and be more likely to earn low incomes. They are also more likely to experience problems in paying rental, electricity bill and with debt. It appears that transgender people continue to experience considerable discrimination at work. Work is required to ensure to them a better living and removal of discrimination at work place is highly required. Prevention education needs to be targeted to the transgender community in a manner that is sensitive to their needs, concerns and fears. Psycho-education programs for transgender youth about approaches to changing their bodies incrementally so that they gain higher body esteem by knowing they would be able to facilitate change over time.
- It is revealed that the health and social care needs of transgender people are currently being adequately met. In particular, transgender people experience problems in accessing the services they need in a timely and sensitive manner. The policy and best practice initiatives that have begun to develop in relation to the health and social care of transgender people.
- There is a lack of social support and mutual building among the transgenders group in this research. Community building and becoming members of this particular community is highly required for any transgender. Transgender community remains ill-defined and geographically dispersed. Social network has proven an effective tool for bringing together this diverse community. Democratic process has to be followed continually.
- Creating awareness on Basic needs and on self-acceptance, empathy, acceptance, affirmation and self-awareness.
- The importance of education has to be focused to transgenders. The government has to take effective measures to support and provide enough educational facilities with the help of non-governmental organizations. Creating awareness on various current fields and making them as knowledgeable persons is highly recommended.

- Non-governmental organizations should throw some more ways and means to transgenders to utilize enough chances for the job opportunities and make them to work permanently. There should be significant increase in the number of the agencies working with transgender people. These Non-governmental organizations and agencies should emphasize community mobilization and advocacy by the community for rights and services.
- There should be interventions to enhance the future of transgender and to enhance psychological resilience for the welfare of the transgenders.

SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS

In this research, the researcher had great interest to work in the area of social challenges and mental health problems of the transgendered people. The researcher had adopted all the methods of social work for the correcting findings for the existing problems and to provide enough measures to support the Governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Social Case Work

Using case work the following areas can be addressed in this transgendered community

- Conducting case study of Transgenders
- Intake of demographic details of Transgenders

- Rapport building and creating active participation of Transgenders
- Finding out the social challenges and discriminations of Transgenders
- Psychological counseling for the transgendered community
- Health counseling can be conducted to all Transgenders
- Conducting counseling sessions for new members of this particular community

Social Group work

The following areas can be dealt in social group work method:

- Social Interaction between the group members of Transgenders
- Formation of Transgenders group
- Focused Group discussion among Transgenders
- Conducted awareness on human dignity of Transgenders
- Legal advice to Transgenders
- Lobbying and advocating for transgender's rights, etc.

Community Organization

The activities carried out are classified like this;

- General health camps can be conducted through non-governmental organizations working for sustainable development of Transgenders
- Community development programmes for the welfare of Transgenders

- Providing educational support to Transgenders
- Creating awareness on social norms to Transgenders
- Providing support to tackle of Transgenders social challenges
- Healthy advice on use of condoms
- Conducting of HIV/AIDS Awareness camps to Transgenders
- Support provided to save money in bank for future of use of Transgenders.

Social Action

The following actions are the mostly focused in social actions:

- Social action for the rights of Transgenders
- Action against violation of human rights of Transgenders
- Action against mistreatment and discriminations of Transgenders
- Action against insults done to Transgenders community
- Fighting for social security of Transgenders
- Fighting for legal support of Transgenders

Social Work Administration

The following areas can be dealt through Social administration in this community.

- Support in continuing Transgenders education
- Innovative steps to have creativity in Transgenders living areas

- Positive outlets to build up community support of Transgenders
- Participation of Transgenders in political activities
- Trans women empowerment
- Entry of Transgenders job to governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Social Work Research

The following initiatives are the mostly focused in Social Work Research:

- A special study carried out on referring reviews, articles and Studies done earlier on transgender community.
- Scholarly paper presentation and Publication of the articles written on this particular community.
- Documentation and reporting of the study is highly specified.
- Tools of data collections, analysis, interpretation and usage of scales, chart and SPSS are recommended.

CONCLUSION

Transgenders youth face a variety of issues: they are of discrimination, unemployment, lack of educational facilities, homelessness, lack of medical facilities, hygiene, depression, fear of anxiety, attitude of intolerance, despair, hatred, hormone pill abuse, tobacco and alcohol abuse, problems related to marriage and adoption and mental health problems." So far, they are excluded effectively participating in social and cultural life; economy; and politics and

decision-making processes. In this research, the researcher focused the Health, Social care and the importance of mental health wellbeing of transgender people. Every Governmental and non-governmental organizations must work for the welfare of transgenders community. This research will be very useful in all the setting to understand the living conditions, household, respect, recognition, discrimination, social relationship and mental health problems and measures of coping mechanism undertaken for promoting mental health wellbeing of all transgenders. There can be also further studies done on this field and innovative methods followed for supportive relationship and lasting sustainable development among transgenders..

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