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# **TRANSGENDER INCLUSION AND CHALLENGES IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: A CRITICAL SOCIO- LEGAL ANALYSIS**

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## **Abstract:**

This paper presents a socio-legal analysis of the challenges faced by transgender individuals in Jammu and Kashmir. Drawing on a survey on hijras, individuals identifying as transgender (both transitioned and non-transitioned), queer, and non-binary persons the study examines key issues such as low educational attainment, high unemployment, pervasive discrimination, and inadequate access to government services and healthcare. Despite the introduction of progressive legal reforms like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, findings indicate that implementation remains inconsistent at the grassroots level, leaving many transgender persons reliant on informal support networks. The study underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policy interventions that enhance legal enforcement, improve educational and employment opportunities, and provide gender-sensitive healthcare services, thereby bridging the gap between statutory rights and lived experiences in the region.

**Keywords:** Transgender Rights, Jammu and Kashmir, Socio-Legal Analysis, Discrimination, Policy Interventions

## **Introduction**

Transgender rights in India have undergone a remarkable transformation over the past few decades, reflecting a broader societal shift from entrenched colonial stigmatization to a more inclusive legal framework. Historically, communities such as hijras held a revered cultural status, fulfilling unique roles in rituals, royal courts, and religious ceremonies. However, colonial policies, notably the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, marked the beginning of systemic marginalization that persisted well into the post-independence era. Despite these historical challenges, the landmark Supreme Court decision in National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India (2014) ushered in a new era by recognizing transgender individuals as a “third gender” and affirming their fundamental rights under the Constitution. Against this

backdrop, recent legal reforms most notably the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and its subsequent Rules, 2020 aim to address the pervasive discrimination and socio-economic exclusion faced by transgender communities. However, despite these progressive measures, implementation remains inconsistent, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir, where traditional social norms and bureaucratic inertia continue to hinder effective access to education, employment, healthcare, and essential government services. This study seeks to provide a socio-legal analysis of the challenges encountered by transgender individuals in Jammu and Kashmir by examining both quantitative data and qualitative insights. Through a survey on hijras, non-transitioned individuals identifying as transgender, queer, and non-binary persons the research explores the critical issues of low educational attainment, high unemployment, pervasive societal stigma, and barriers to legal recognition and healthcare. Ultimately, the study aims to highlight the gap between progressive legal frameworks and the lived experiences of transgender persons, thereby informing policy interventions that can bridge this divide and promote greater social justice and inclusion.

### **Literature review**

In recent years, the evolution of transgender rights in India has been marked by significant legal reforms most notably, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and its accompanying Rules, 2020<sup>i</sup> (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2020) yet a substantial body of academic research reveals that these progressive legal frameworks frequently fall short in addressing the practical challenges faced by transgender individuals, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir where traditional gender norms, socio-cultural stigma, and regional political complexities intensify discrimination and social exclusion. Studies by Verma<sup>ii</sup> (2018) and Reddy and Mehta<sup>iii</sup> (2019) underscore that bureaucratic inefficiencies and opaque administrative processes often undermine the intended benefits of legal recognition, while research by Chatterjee<sup>iv</sup> (2017) and Singh<sup>v</sup> (2020) documents the persistent marginalization and social ostracism experienced by transgender communities. Regional analyses by Khan<sup>vi</sup> (2019), Sharma<sup>vii</sup> (2019), and Ahmed<sup>viii</sup> (2021) highlight the unique challenges within Jammu and Kashmir, emphasizing that the gap between statutory rights and lived realities remains wide. Interdisciplinary approaches advocated by Gupta and Rao<sup>ix</sup> (2021) and Nair<sup>x</sup> (2020), alongside methodological insights from Roy<sup>xi</sup> (2018) and Iyer<sup>xii</sup> (2021), call for integrated legal and social interventions that combine policy analysis with empirical data to capture both administrative processes and personal experiences. Collectively, these studies suggest the necessity of a comprehensive socio-legal analysis that bridges the

divide between well-intended legal reforms and the complex socio-cultural environment in Jammu and Kashmir, paving the way for policies that are not only legally robust but also socially responsive.

### **Research methodology**

This research adopts a mixed-method approach that combines doctrinal legal analysis with qualitative empirical research to examine the legal and social challenges faced by transgender persons in Jammu and Kashmir. The study begins with a critical review of primary legal sources including the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, its accompanying Rules, 2020, and relevant government notifications alongside secondary sources such as academic literature, case law, and policy reports to establish the legal framework and its intended benefits. Complementing this, qualitative methods are employed through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including transgender individuals, legal practitioners, social activists, and government officials from the region. Purposive sampling ensures diverse perspectives are captured, enabling an in-depth exploration of both the administrative processes and lived experiences. By triangulating these approaches, the research aims to reveal the discrepancies between statutory provisions and real-world practices, offering a comprehensive socio-legal analysis of the challenges in Jammu and Kashmir.

### **Historical and cultural importance of transgenders**

Transgender persons in India encompassing Hijras, eunuchs, kothis, aravanis, jogappas, and Shiv Shakthis have been integral to the subcontinent's cultural tapestry for over 4,000 years, with their origins deeply rooted in ancient texts such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, as well as in Vedic and Jain literature that introduce concepts like "napunsaka" and "psychological sex" to describe non-binary identities<sup>xiii</sup>. Historically, Hijras held esteemed positions as guards, advisors, and entertainers in royal courts, particularly during the medieval Mughal and Ottoman eras, where their roles were both ritualistic and socially significant<sup>xiv</sup>. Despite this longstanding cultural importance evident in their traditional participation in ceremonies like baby-naming rituals, where their blessings were considered auspicious the onset of colonial rule in the 18th century dramatically altered their social standing, as epitomized by the British-imposed Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which stigmatized the entire community as inherently criminal<sup>xv</sup>. Although the Act was repealed after independence, the legacy of marginalization persisted, contributing to contemporary challenges in accessing

education, employment, and healthcare, and reinforcing societal prejudice even as the reforms such as the landmark 2019 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act and its 2020 Rules<sup>xvi</sup> have sought to redress these disparities by formally recognizing community's historical and cultural contributions are acknowledged. In recent decades, legal transgender individuals as a "third gender" and mandating protections against discrimination<sup>xvii</sup>. Nonetheless, census data from 2011, which estimated that around 4.88 lakh transgender people live in India, and ongoing research highlight that the juxtaposition of ancient reverence with modern exclusion continues to define the lived realities of transgender persons, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive socio-legal reforms that honour their historical legacy while ensuring their full inclusion in contemporary society<sup>xviii</sup>.

### Demographics and literacy among transgenders in India

According to the 2011 Census, India recorded over 4.88 lakh individuals identifying as transgender, with notable regional variations in population, literacy, and socio-economic indicators. For instance, Uttar Pradesh reported 137,465 transgender individuals with a literacy rate of 55.80%, while states like Kerala and Mizoram showcased higher literacy rates of 84.61% and 87.14%, respectively. The data also reveals variations in the presence of transgender children (age 0-6) and the distribution across Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), highlighting both the diversity and the socio-economic challenges faced by this community. This comprehensive demographic snapshot is summarized in the table below:

**Table 1:** Transgender population in India by caste and literacy rate State / UT

State/UT	Transgenders	Child (0-6)	SC	ST	Literacy %
Uttar Pradesh	137,465	18,734	26,404	639	55.80
Andhra Pradesh	43,769	4,082	6,226	3,225	53.33
Maharashtra	40,891	4,101	4,691	3,529	67.57
Bihar	40,827	5,971	6,295	506	44.35
West Bengal	30,349	2,376	6,474	1,474	58.83
Madhya Pradesh	29,597	3,409	4,361	5,260	53.01
Tamil Nadu	22,364	1,289	4,203	180	57.78
Orissa	20,332	2,125	3,236	4,553	54.35
Karnataka	20,266	1,771	3,275	1,324	58.82
Rajasthan	16,517	2,012	2,961	1,805	48.34

Jharkhand	13,463	1,593	1,499	3,735	47.58
Gujarat	11,544	1,028	664	1,238	62.82
Assam	11,374	1,348	774	1,223	53.69
Punjab	10,243	813	3,055	0	59.75
Haryana	8,422	1,107	1,456	0	62.11
Chhattisgarh	6,591	706	742	1,963	51.35
Uttarakhand	4,555	512	731	95	62.65
Delhi	4,213	311	490	0	62.99
Jammu and Kashmir	4,137	487	207	385	49.29
Kerala	3,902	295	337	51	84.61
Himachal Pradesh	2,051	154	433	118	62.10
Manipur	1,343	177	40	378	67.50
Tripura	833	66	172	181	71.19
Meghalaya	627	134	3	540	57.40
Arunachal Pradesh	495	64	0	311	52.20
Goa	398	34	9	33	73.90
Nagaland	398	63	0	335	70.75
Puducherry	252	16	40	0	60.59
Mizoram	166	26	1	146	87.14
Chandigarh	142	16	22	0	72.22
Sikkim	126	14	9	37	65.18
Daman and Diu	59	10	1	2	75.51
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	47	5	0	3	73.81
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	43	5	0	22	73.68
Lakshadweep	2	0	0	2	50.00
<b>India</b>	<b>487,803</b>	<b>54,854</b>	<b>78,811</b>	<b>33,293</b>	<b>56.07</b>

This synthesis of historical reverence and contemporary statistical insights not only underscores the deep-rooted cultural importance of transgender communities in India but also highlights the ongoing socio-economic challenges they face, calling for continued efforts to ensure their full inclusion and protection in modern society.

## Major issues faced by transgenders in India

Transgender individuals in India face a myriad of deeply entrenched challenges that cut across social, economic, legal, and political domains. Despite a rich historical legacy where communities like Hijras were once revered for their ritualistic and advisory roles in ancient courts and religious ceremonies, modern transgender people are largely marginalized and stigmatized. They continue to encounter systemic discrimination in families, educational institutions, healthcare, and workplaces experiencing abuse, social exclusion, and even violence on a daily basis. Economic opportunities remain severely constrained due to low literacy rates, lack of skill training, and societal prejudice that often forces many into precarious livelihoods such as begging or sex work. Legally, although recent reforms such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 have been introduced to secure their rights and formally recognize them as a “third gender,” the implementation of these provisions is fraught with bureaucratic inefficiencies and inconsistent enforcement, leaving many without proper identity documents or access to essential services. Additionally, transgender individuals often face barriers in obtaining legal recognition for marriage, inheritance, and adoption, further entrenching their vulnerability. These multifaceted issues are compounded by a pervasive lack of awareness and sensitivity among law enforcement, healthcare providers, and the broader society, which not only perpetuates discrimination but also denies transgender people the dignity and respect they deserve. The ongoing struggle to bridge the gap between ancient cultural acknowledgment and contemporary societal rejection underscores the urgent need for comprehensive, inclusive policies and grassroots initiatives that empower transgender communities and promote social justice for all.

### Post-Independence Shifts in Transgender Identity and Recognition

After independence, the landscape for transgender individuals in India began a gradual transformation. Previously marginalized under colonial policies like the Criminal Tribes Act, the post-independence era marked the start of a reimagined national identity that began to acknowledge the cultural significance and unique identity of transgender communities. Traditional roles once celebrated in ancient texts found renewed recognition, albeit slowly, as society started questioning the colonial stigma attached to transgender lives.

**Legal Reforms and Policy Interventions:** In recent decades, legal and policy reforms have emerged as a beacon of hope for transgender rights. Landmark decisions, such as the decriminalization of Section 377 in 2014 and the subsequent enactment of the Transgender

Persons (Protection of Rights) Act<sup>xix</sup>, 2019, have paved the way for formal recognition of transgender people as the “third gender.” These reforms have aimed to dismantle bureaucratic hurdles, improve access to welfare schemes, and secure legal identity documents, even as challenges in implementation persist.

**Evolving Social Attitudes and Economic Empowerment:** Social awareness regarding transgender issues has grown steadily since independence, driven by increased media coverage, advocacy by NGOs, and grassroots activism. Educational initiatives and sensitization programs have begun to reshape public perceptions, leading to more inclusive attitudes in urban centres. Despite this progress, many transgender individuals continue to face economic marginalization, low literacy rates, and limited employment opportunities. Efforts to provide vocational training and entrepreneurial support are gradually fostering a more empowered community, even as traditional prejudices remain a formidable barrier.

**Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions:** While significant strides have been made in the post-independence era, contemporary challenges persist. The gap between progressive legal frameworks and their practical enforcement, coupled with entrenched societal biases, continues to affect transgender individuals’ daily lives. Moving forward, a holistic approach that combines legal reforms with social and economic empowerment is essential. Enhanced government interventions, robust public policies, and sustained advocacy will be crucial in ensuring that the historical legacy of transgender communities is honoured while their rights are fully integrated into the modern fabric of Indian society.

### **Legal Milestones in Transgender Rights in India**

Since the early post-independence years, India has witnessed a series of landmark legal advances aimed at recognizing and protecting the rights of transgender persons, reflecting a gradual shift from colonial-era stigmatization to a more inclusive legal framework. A watershed moment came in 2014 with the Supreme Court’s decision in National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India<sup>xx</sup>, which formally recognized transgender individuals as the “third gender” and affirmed their fundamental rights under the Constitution. This ruling not only acknowledged the distinct identity of transgender persons but also directed the government to provide them with reservations in education and employment, and to take measures for their social, economic, and political empowerment. Building on this judicial recognition, further legal strides were made with the introduction of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which was aimed at safeguarding transgender rights by outlining provisions for legal identity, anti-discrimination measures, and access to public

services. Complementing this Act, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 were subsequently issued by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, providing detailed procedural guidelines for obtaining identity certificates, facilitating the updating of official records, and ensuring that transgender individuals can avail themselves of various government benefits. In addition, several administrative reforms have been implemented such as the inclusion of a third gender option in passport applications and voter identity documents further institutionalizing the recognition of transgender rights. These legal advancements, coupled with progressive judicial interpretations of privacy and personal liberty (as seen in cases like *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India*<sup>xxi</sup>, 2018, which, while primarily addressing Section 377, contributed to the broader discourse on LGBTQ rights), represent a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive legal system. However, despite these robust legal frameworks, challenges in implementation remain, and continuous efforts by both civil society and the state are essential to ensure that the benefits of these reforms reach the grassroots level.

### **Study Area: Jammu and Kashmir**

Jammu and Kashmir, a region steeped in cultural richness and historical complexity in northern India, provides a unique context for examining the socio-legal challenges faced by transgender individuals. Traditionally known for its diverse cultural influences blending Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist traditions the area has witnessed a dynamic evolution of social norms over centuries. However, the modern political and administrative reorganization, especially following its conversion into a Union Territory, has compounded the difficulties experienced by marginalized groups. According to the 2011 Census, Jammu and Kashmir recorded a transgender population of over 4,137 individuals, with a literacy rate of only 49.29%, underscoring significant socio-economic hurdles. In this environment, transgender persons encounter entrenched social stigma, limited access to quality education and healthcare, and pervasive discrimination in employment and public services. While progressive legal reforms such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 offer hope, their implementation in Jammu and Kashmir is often impeded by bureaucratic inefficiencies and local cultural resistance. This study delves into the intersection of legal and social issues in the region, exploring how the local socio-cultural landscape, political volatility, and economic disparities influence both the lived experiences of transgender individuals and the efficacy of state interventions aimed at their protection and inclusion.

## Mode of Survey

This study employs a mixed-methods survey approach to capture a comprehensive picture of the socio-legal challenges faced by transgender individuals in Jammu and Kashmir. The survey incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Structured questionnaires were administered to gather numerical data on demographics, employment, education, and access to government services, ensuring that key statistical trends are captured. In parallel, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to explore the lived experiences, personal narratives, and nuanced perspectives of transgender individuals, as well as those of relevant stakeholders such as social workers, legal experts, and government officials. Data collection was carried out through a combination of face-to-face interactions especially in areas with limited internet connectivity and online platforms to reach a broader population across both urban and rural settings. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that diverse voices within the transgender community were included, while ethical protocols were strictly followed to guarantee confidentiality, voluntary participation, and respectful treatment of sensitive information. This multi-pronged survey strategy not only enriches the analysis with robust statistical evidence but also provides deeper insights into the personal and systemic challenges experienced by transgender individuals in the region.

## Participants

In a survey of 100 individuals from the transgender community in Jammu and Kashmir comprising of hijras, transgender women who have transitioned, males identifying as female (but not fully transitioned), females identifying as male (but not transitioned), as well as queer and non-binary persons the data reveals a community facing significant socio-economic challenges. The average age of respondents was approximately 30 years. A vast majority reported limited formal education; around 70% either had education only up to the 12th standard or were completely uneducated, and only 15% had attained a graduate degree. Employment remains a pressing issue, with roughly 75% of respondents unemployed. Many are forced into precarious and stigmatized livelihoods, with a significant number engaged in begging or prostitution, while only about 20% manage to secure any form of work, and a mere 5% are employed in formal roles. Additionally, nearly 85% of respondents reported frequent experiences of discrimination and stigma, and around 70% encountered substantial barriers when accessing government services, particularly for obtaining legal identification documents. Satisfaction with recent legal reforms, such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights)

Act, 2019, was notably low, with more than half expressing dissatisfaction due to poor implementation at the grassroots level. Furthermore, access to healthcare remains inadequate for nearly 45% of the surveyed individuals, highlighting an urgent need for gender-sensitive health services. Overall, the survey data underscores the community's heavy reliance on support from community organizations for legal, social, and emotional assistance, thereby revealing a significant gap in state-sponsored initiatives and emphasizing the necessity for more inclusive and effective policy interventions.

**Table 2: Summary of Key Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Category / Value</b>	<b>Percentage/ Average</b>
<b>Age</b>	Average Age	30 years
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	Uneducated / Up to 12th Standard	70%
	Graduate or above	15%
	Some Intermediate/12th (Mixed levels)	15%
<b>Employment Status</b>	Unemployed	75%
	Informal Employment (e.g., begging, prostitution)	20%
	Formal Employment	5%
<b>Experience of Discrimination</b>	Frequently Experiences Discrimination	85%
<b>Barriers in Accessing Government Services</b>	Encountered Significant Barriers (e.g., ID, documents)	70%
<b>Satisfaction with Legal Reforms</b>	Expressed Dissatisfaction (e.g., poor implementation)	50% (approx.)
<b>Healthcare Accessibility</b>	Reported Inadequate Access to Gender-Sensitive Healthcare	45%
<b>Primary Support Sources</b>	Community Organizations, Family/Friends	Majority (qualitative finding)

#### **Detailed Findings:**

- **Demographic Profile:**

- The average age of respondents is approximately 30 years.

- The sample includes a diverse mix of hijras, transgender women who have transitioned, individuals assigned male at birth who identify as female (but have not fully transitioned), those assigned female at birth who identify as male (but have not transitioned), as well as queer and non-binary persons.
- **Educational Attainment:**
  - About 70% of respondents have either completed education only up to the 12th standard or are completely uneducated.
  - Only around 15% of respondents have attained a graduate degree.
  - The remaining 15% possess some intermediate-level qualifications, indicating a significant overall gap in formal education.
- **Employment and Livelihood:**
  - Approximately 75% of the surveyed individuals are unemployed.
  - Around 20% are engaged in informal and precarious forms of employment, notably begging or prostitution.
  - Only about 5% of respondents hold formal employment positions, highlighting severe economic marginalization.
- **Experiences of Discrimination and Stigma:**
  - A substantial 85% of respondents report frequent experiences of discrimination, harassment, and social stigma based on their gender identity.
  - This pervasive discrimination contributes to their exclusion from mainstream social, educational, and economic opportunities.
- **Access to Government Services:**
  - About 70% of respondents have faced significant barriers when accessing government services, especially in obtaining legal identity documents such as ID cards, passports, or voter IDs.
  - These administrative hurdles further restrict their ability to access welfare schemes and other state benefits.
- **Satisfaction with Legal Reforms:**
  - Nearly 50% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with recent legal reforms like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.
  - The primary reason for dissatisfaction is the poor implementation of these laws at the grassroots level.
- **Healthcare Accessibility:**
  - Roughly 45% of participants reported inadequate access to gender-sensitive

healthcare services.

- Many highlighted a lack of specialized facilities and discrimination from healthcare providers as major challenges in receiving appropriate medical care.
- **Support Networks:**
  - The majority of respondents rely primarily on community organizations, as well as support from family and friends, for legal, social, and emotional assistance.
  - Government-provided support remains minimal, underscoring a significant gap in state-sponsored initiatives.

### **Conclusion:**

The study of transgender issues in Jammu and Kashmir reveals a community facing multifaceted challenges despite progressive legal frameworks such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. The survey data indicate that a significant majority of transgender individuals comprising proven hijras, non-transitioned individuals identifying as female or male, and queer/non-binary persons are young yet largely undereducated, with nearly 70% having only reached up to the 12th standard or having no formal education at all. This educational deficit is directly linked to high unemployment rates, with 75% of respondents being jobless and many resorting to informal, stigmatized livelihoods like begging or prostitution. The pervasive discrimination experienced by 85% of the community not only undermines their social dignity but also hampers access to essential government services and healthcare, where nearly half of the respondents report inadequate gender-sensitive facilities. Moreover, despite legal advances, nearly 50% of the surveyed individuals express dissatisfaction with the implementation of transgender rights reforms at the grassroots level. These findings underscore the urgent need for a holistic approach to address the socio-economic, legal, and health-related disparities that continue to marginalize transgender communities in the region.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Enhance Legal Implementation:**
  - Strengthen the implementation of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 through streamlined administrative processes and regular monitoring to ensure that legal identity documents and welfare benefits are effectively accessible at the local level.

- Facilitate the inclusion of transgender individuals in all government forms and documentation (e.g., voter IDs, passports, and Aadhar cards) by ensuring a clear “third gender” category.
- **Improve Educational Opportunities:**
  - Develop targeted educational programs and scholarship schemes specifically for transgender youth to reduce dropout rates and improve literacy, thereby enabling better employment prospects.
  - Collaborate with educational institutions to integrate gender sensitization modules and support services tailored to the needs of transgender students.
- **Expand Employment and Skill Development Programs:**
  - Create and promote vocational training and capacity-building initiatives that are inclusive of transgender individuals, with a focus on facilitating entry into both formal and informal sectors.
  - Encourage public and private sector employers to adopt inclusive hiring practices, possibly supported by government incentives, to increase employment opportunities for transgender persons.
- **Strengthen Healthcare Access:**
  - Establish gender-sensitive healthcare facilities and services, including mental health support and specialized treatments such as hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery.
  - Train healthcare providers on transgender-specific issues to reduce stigma and ensure compassionate, non-discriminatory care.
- **Increase Awareness and Social Inclusion:**
  - Launch public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing social stigma and discrimination against transgender communities by highlighting their cultural heritage and contributions.
  - Foster partnerships with NGOs, community organizations, and local leaders to create support networks and advocacy groups that promote the rights and dignity of transgender individuals.
- **Conduct Regular Surveys and Data Collection:**
  - Implement periodic, comprehensive surveys to update demographic and socio-economic data on the transgender community, ensuring that policy interventions are based on accurate and current information.

- Involve transgender representatives in the data collection process to ensure that the methodology is sensitive and inclusive.

By addressing these recommendations, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards creating an environment in Jammu and Kashmir where transgender individuals are empowered to overcome socio-economic challenges and fully exercise their rights as citizens, thereby bridging the gap between legal provisions and lived experiences.

### Conflict of interest

The study was conducted independently and without any external influence from funders or other external bodies that may stand to gain from the findings of this research. The data and conclusions presented in this paper are exclusively based on the authors' research work and represent their honest analysis and findings.

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