

DECLINING VALUE SYSTEM REGARDING THE OUTLOOK TOWARDS
TRANSGENDER WITH REFERENCE TO INDIA- A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Transgenders are known by many names, the community includes Hijras, Eunuchs, Kothis, Aravanis, Jogappas, Shiv-Shakthis etc. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the reasons for the fall of the transgender community in Lucknow. To learn about the history and evolution of the transgender community in India during the Mughal period. Hijra's were given prominent position such as the political advisor and the administrator in the empire. Many academics have visited India during the 17th century have given a vivid account of the position of the transgender in the Mughal court. The decline of this community started to unfold with the rise of the British rule in India. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was introduced in 1861 during the British rule of India. Modelled on the Buggery Act of 1533, it makes sexual activities "against the order of nature" illegal. On 6th September 2018, the Supreme Court of India had decriminalized section 377 partially, and since then people from the LGBTQ community have broken up the shackle of the society and opened up about their lives and how the decriminalization of section 377 has improved their life.

KEYWORDS: Transgender, Community, Indian Penal Code, Decline, LGBTQ.

Introduction

The transgender community, encompassing a diverse spectrum of gender identities, has historically occupied complex social and cultural roles across civilizations worldwide. In India, the transgender population, often termed Hijras, Kothis, Aravanis, Jogappas, and other regional names, reflect a distinct social group deeply embedded in cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and societal structures. Despite this rich heritage, the transgender community in India, and especially in cities such as Lucknow, has faced a significant decline in their social status and value system over time. This decline manifests in widespread discrimination, exclusion, and limited access to essential services, which continue to perpetuate cycles of marginalization and vulnerability.

The importance of examining the declining social value system towards transgender persons lies in understanding the complex interplay of historical, cultural, legal, and social factors shaping their current realities. While the Mughal period conferred considerable respect and political significance on transgender individuals, the advent of British colonial rule introduced policies that criminalized and ostracized their identities and ways of life. Such systemic marginalization was compounded by persistent societal prejudices and lack of legal protections in post-colonial India, which has only recently begun addressing these issues through legislation such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Lucknow, with its historical prominence as a Mughal and Nawabi cultural hub, provides a unique context to explore these dynamics. The city's transgender community has experienced both the legacies of past reverence and the harsh realities of contemporary discrimination. This study aims to critically analyze these patterns to shed light on the reasons behind the decline in societal value accorded to transgender persons and to identify avenues for reversing this trend.

The objectives of this research paper are threefold. First, to trace the historical evolution of transgender status in India with an emphasis on Lucknow, highlighting the shifts caused by socio-political changes. Second, to assess the present-day social challenges and legal frameworks shaping transgender lives, including a review of policy effectiveness. Third, to document empirical insights from transgender individuals in Lucknow to give voice to lived experiences and recovery strategies. This comprehensive approach is crucial for understanding both structural obstacles and emerging successes in advancing transgender rights and dignity.

This research is guided by the following questions:

- How has the social value system regarding transgender persons evolved historically in Lucknow?
- What are the major challenges currently faced by the transgender community in terms of social acceptance, legal rights, and livelihood?
- To what extent have recent legislative and policy interventions succeeded in improving transgender welfare?
- What are the lived realities of transgender individuals in Lucknow, and what coping mechanisms or community strategies do they employ?
- How can society, policy makers, and civil society better address the declining value system and promote inclusion?

The significance of this study is manifold. It contributes to filling gaps in scholarship on transgender issues in North India by focusing on a culturally significant city with a large transgender population. It also informs policymakers and advocates by presenting grounded data on challenges and successes. Ultimately, it aims to foster greater awareness and action towards restoring dignity and equality for transgender persons

Literature Review

• Historical Context of the Transgender Community in India

The presence and recognition of transgender persons, often referred to as the "third gender," have been recorded in Indian society since ancient times. These individuals diverged from the binary classification of male and female and played distinct roles within social and religious frameworks. Classic Hindu epics and scriptures, such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, mention characters reflecting non-binary gender identities, indicating societal acknowledgment of gender diversity in early Indian culture

• The Mughal Era and Elevated Roles

During the Mughal period (16th–19th centuries), transgender individuals, including eunuchs and hijras, were often integrated into the royal household with high esteem. They served as political advisors, administrators, and guardians of the women's quarters or harems, roles that required immense trust and discretion. For instance, eunuchs like Itimad Khan amassed wealth and wielded significant political influence. European travelers of the period noted their privileged status, observing their lavish lifestyle and the power they held behind the scenes in the Mughal courts. This historical vantage underscores a time when transgender identities were not only accepted but empowered in Indian society.

• Impact of British Colonialism: Marginalization and Criminalization

The advent of British colonial rule radically transformed the societal status and legal treatment of transgender individuals in India. British authorities imposed rigid Victorian moral codes, criminalizing many aspects of non-heteronormative behavior and appearance. The Indian Penal Code's Section 377 of 1860 criminalized sexual activities "against the order of nature," disproportionately affecting transgender and LGBTQ+ communities. Additionally, the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 designated hijras as a "criminal tribe," branding them as inherently unlawful and imposing harsh policing and social control.

British policies sought to regulate gender expression, prohibiting transgender individuals from dressing in feminine attire or engaging freely in their traditional roles. Those who defied such norms faced public humiliation, including being stripped and having their hair cut by police. The colonizers' associations of transgender persons with filth and immorality deeply stigmatized them within the social psyche, reversing the earlier respect they had enjoyed .

- **Post-Independence Legal and Social Developments**

Following independence, India grappled with the remnants of colonial-era stigma and legal inequities against transgender persons. For many decades, transgender individuals remained unrecognized in law and public policy, perpetuating social exclusion and economic marginalization. It was not until the landmark 2014 Supreme Court judgment in the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) case that transgender persons gained formal legal recognition as the "third gender." This ruling mandated affirmative measures by the government, protecting the fundamental rights of transgender persons and requiring reservations in education and employment .

The NALSA judgment catalyzed legislative efforts, culminating in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. The Act provides safeguards against discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare and grants the right to self-identify one's gender. However, the legislation has faced criticism, particularly for the requirement that transgender persons must obtain a certificate from a district magistrate to legally change their gender, potentially exposing them to bureaucratic delays and discrimination. Implementation gaps and weak enforcement remain pressing concerns.

- **Recent Academic Research and Policy Initiatives**

Recent scholarship emphasizes the importance of inclusive education and social policies to integrate transgender persons fully. For example, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes transgender individuals as a socioeconomically disadvantaged group, recommending gender-sensitive curricula and facilities in schools (webGovernment and civil society initiatives aim to improve vocational training, healthcare access, and legal awareness among transgender communities. Some states, such as Karnataka, have introduced reservations and welfare schemes specifically for transgender persons. Nevertheless, challenges persist, especially for marginalized subgroups within the community, such as Dalit and Adivasi transgender persons ().

Despite progress, transgender enrollment in higher education remains disproportionately low, with societal stigma and infrastructural shortcomings contributing to this disparity. Advocacy groups continue to push for stronger protections and affirmative action as India strives to fulfill the constitutional promise of equality for all its citizens ().

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative research design aimed at exploring the lived experiences, historical context, and socio-legal realities of the transgender community in Lucknow, India. The qualitative approach is appropriate for understanding the nuanced social value systems, identity challenges, and coping strategies that are often inaccessible through quantitative methods alone.

- **Data Collection**

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with transgender individuals residing in Lucknow. Participants included Hijras, Kothis, and other gender-diverse persons, representing a cross-section of ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and community affiliations. Interview questions focused on participants' personal histories, experiences with social acceptance and discrimination, awareness and access to legal protections, and aspirations for the future.

Additionally, field observations at community gatherings and local NGO centers serving transgender individuals provided contextual insights into social dynamics and support networks.

Secondary data was obtained through an extensive review of historical documents, legal texts, academic articles, government reports, and credible online sources. Archival materials tracing the community's status from the Mughal era to contemporary times were analyzed to map the evolution of their societal value system.

- **Participant Selection**

Participants were selected via purposive sampling through contacts established with local advocacy groups and NGOs working with transgender communities in Lucknow. Selection criteria prioritized individuals willing to share their experiences openly and represent diverse identity groups within the transgender spectrum.

Due ethical considerations were maintained to ensure anonymity, informed consent, and respect for participants' dignity throughout the research process.

- **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts and field notes were analyzed thematically. Coding was used to identify recurring patterns related to social stigma, discrimination, access to rights, community resilience, and perceptions of historical decline and legal progress. The qualitative data were complemented by historical and policy analyses to situate personal narratives within broader socio-political frameworks.

- **Limitations**

While the qualitative approach allows for rich, detailed exploration, limitations include the relatively small sample size, which may not be statistically generalizable to all transgender persons in Lucknow or India. Further quantitative research is suggested to complement these findings. Social desirability bias in interviews and potential reluctance to discuss sensitive topics may also affect data completeness.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides critical insights into the complex intersection of history, law, and lived experience shaping the transgender community's social value system.

Historical Evolution of the Transgender Community in Lucknow

Lucknow, as a historical center of Mughal and later Nawabi culture, has a unique and longstanding relationship with the transgender community that reflects broader shifts across Indian society. Understanding this evolution requires tracing the cultural and political roles transgender persons held in the region, alongside the colonial and postcolonial transformations that reshaped their social value.

• Transgender Communities During the Mughal Era

During the Mughal era (16th to 19th centuries), transgender individuals in Lucknow and other imperial centers were assigned important societal roles, often in close proximity to power. Known by various names such as eunuchs, hijras, and khwajasaras, they were integral to the functioning of royal courts. Transgender eunuchs guarded harems, advised rulers, and served as court officials. Historical accounts describe eunuchs like Itimad-ud-Daulah, a eunuch nobleman who played significant political roles, illuminating the prominence transgender persons attained in courtly life (web:Lucknow, flourishing under the Nawabs, was a seat of refined culture and politics, where transgender persons held recognized but distinct social identities. Their presence at cultural functions, religious ceremonies, and as performers was well acknowledged. The Hijra community also maintained communal living spaces (khanqahs) that supported their social and economic activities. Their societal value was tied both to spiritual and cultural symbolism as well as practical political functions ()).

• British Colonial Impact: Decline and Criminalization

The arrival of British colonial rule marked a stark rupture in the transgender community's social standing in Lucknow. Victorian morality and legal systems imposed rigid gender binaries and criminalized alternative gender identities. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 labeled hijras as habitual criminals, legitimizing police harassment and social ostracism. This law, coupled with Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (1860), not only stifled the traditional roles of transgender persons but also forced them into marginal economic activities, such as begging and sex work, due to limited livelihood options. The British administration's interference with the hijras' traditional roles — for example, their role in childbirth ceremonies and local patronage systems — undermined their cultural and economic viability. Enforcement of stern regulations, including prohibitions on wearing feminine attire, effectively erased their public visibility and honor. The decline in their social value system was rapid and profound, with transgender persons forced into the shadows of social life in Lucknow .

• Transition Through Independence to Contemporary Times

Post-independence India retained many colonial-era attitudes and laws, resulting in continued neglect and discrimination against transgender persons in Lucknow. While some legal reforms have been attempted, societal acceptance lagged. Transgender persons remained largely excluded from formal education, healthcare, and employment.

The late 20th century witnessed the rise of transgender activism across India, including in Lucknow, seeking recognition and rights through political advocacy, media representation, and alliances with human rights groups. These efforts culminated in the 2014 Supreme Court NALSA judgment, which legally recognized 'third gender' status, and the 2019 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act. These developments represent significant milestones in recovering the social and legal value lost during colonial times.

However, in Lucknow, as elsewhere, practical challenges remain. Stigma and exclusion persist, often overriding formal legal protections. The community's efforts to reclaim their social roles and dignity continue amidst ongoing structural barriers.

• Socio-Cultural Practices and Identity Markers

In Lucknow, traditional transgender communal identities remain central to cultural practices and social support systems. Khanqahs serve as communal spaces fostering identity continuity and economic cooperation. Ritual performances, blessings at weddings and childbirths, and participation in religious festivals sustain cultural visibility. Yet, younger generations increasingly seek integration into broader society, reflecting evolving identity politics.

Contemporary Legal Framework and Policies

The legal landscape governing the rights and protections of transgender persons in India, including in Lucknow, has undergone significant transformation in recent years. These changes reflect growing recognition of transgender rights as human rights, though the effectiveness of laws and policies continues to be debated.

• Overview of Indian Laws Affecting Transgender Persons

The key legal breakthrough for transgender rights in India was the Supreme Court's National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) judgment in 2014. The court recognized transgender persons as a 'third gender' and affirmed their fundamental rights, including the right to self-identification, protection from discrimination, and reservation in education and employment sectors. The judgment directed the government to implement social welfare schemes and ensure accessible healthcare for transgender persons.

Building upon NALSA, the Indian Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. This law prohibits discrimination against transgender persons in education, employment, healthcare, and access to public services. It stipulates the right to self-perceived gender identity; however, it requires transgender persons to apply to a district magistrate to obtain certification of their gender identity legally. The Act also mandates the establishment of welfare schemes by the government to ensure social security, education, and employment opportunities.

• Regional Rules and Policies in Lucknow/Uttar Pradesh

In Uttar Pradesh, where Lucknow is the capital, the enforcement of transgender rights aligns with national legislation but faces regional challenges related to social stigma and resource constraints. The state government has initiated some welfare

measures including scholarships, skill development programs, and healthcare camps specifically for transgender persons. However, awareness and implementation effectiveness vary widely across urban and rural areas.

NGOs in Lucknow, such as the Hijra Habba and other community organizations, play vital roles in bridging gaps between transgender communities and governmental services. They provide education, legal aid, vocational training, and health awareness programs while advocating for better policy enforcement at the state level.

- **Gaps and Challenges in Legal Enforcement**

Despite the progressive stance of laws, on-ground realities often paint a different picture. The certification process under the 2019 Act has been criticized for bureaucratic delays and potential for harassment by officials, undermining the right to self-identify freely. Additionally, laws lack specific provisions for affirmative action such as reservations for transgender persons in government jobs or education, leaving structural inequalities unaddressed.

Crimes against transgender persons, including violence and hate crimes, are not robustly addressed due to limited legal deterrents and underreporting caused by fear of social backlash and police insensitivity. Access to healthcare, especially gender-affirmative care, is inconsistent, with many transgender persons in Lucknow relying on informal networks for medical transition.

- **Policy Initiatives by Government and NGOs**

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment established a National Council for Transgender Persons to monitor policy implementation and advise the government. This council collaborates with various stakeholders to design welfare schemes targeting education, health, employment, and social security.

NGOs have catalyzed community empowerment through awareness campaigns, legal literacy workshops, and creating inclusive spaces. In Lucknow, local initiatives focus on bridging transgender youth to formal education and vocational skills training, aiming to diversify employment beyond traditional roles. These programs also address mental health concerns, substance abuse, and social reintegration.

The transgender community in Lucknow, like their counterparts across India, continues to face a multitude of social challenges. Despite legal recognition and policy initiatives, entrenched societal biases and structural barriers substantially impede their ability to live with dignity and equality. This section explores key areas of difficulty impacting education, employment, healthcare, safety, and social acceptance.

Discrimination and Social Exclusion in Education, Employment, and Healthcare

Access to education remains limited for many transgender persons in Lucknow due to stigma, bullying, and institutional insensitivity. Many transgender youth drop out early due to harassment or lack of facilities such as gender-neutral restrooms. This educational exclusion limits future employment opportunities and perpetuates cycles of poverty.

Employment discrimination is widespread, forcing many transgender individuals into informal or stigmatized occupations such as begging, sex work, or traditional roles within the hijra community. Professional sectors and government jobs, although legally accessible, remain largely elusive due to biases at recruitment stages and toxic workplace environments.

Healthcare access for transgender persons is often compromised by gaps in gender-affirmative care, lack of trained medical professionals, and high costs. Mental health issues, including depression and anxiety related to discrimination and identity struggles, are prevalent but underserved due to stigma and lack of services.

- **Violence, Abuse, and Safety Concerns**

Transgender persons face disproportionately high rates of violence, including physical abuse, sexual assault, and homicide. In Lucknow, reports indicate that transgender individuals experience harassment both in public spaces and within families. Economic dependence and social isolation exacerbate vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking.

Police brutality and neglect of crimes against transgender persons hinder justice and reinforce cycles of victimization. Fear of law enforcement often results in underreporting of offenses, leaving many without recourse or protection.

- **Access to Welfare and Government Support**

Government welfare schemes for transgender persons are poorly disseminated and inconsistently implemented in Lucknow. Many individuals remain unaware of entitlements to scholarships, healthcare benefits, or skill development programs. Complex application procedures and bureaucratic hurdles further limit uptake.

Community support systems, including NGOs and local transgender organizations, play an essential role in filling service gaps but often lack sustainable funding to meet demand. Residential shelters, legal counseling, and health outreach programs remain insufficient to address the breadth of need.

- **Mental Health and Community Resilience**

The cumulative impact of social stigma, violence, and exclusion has profound effects on mental health within the transgender community. Depression, substance abuse, suicidality, and trauma are reported frequently. However, resilience emerges through strong community networks, mutual aid groups, and cultural practices.

Khanqahs and transgender-led collectives in Lucknow provide emotional support, shared resources, and advocacy platforms. These communal identities help preserve cultural heritage and foster a sense of belonging despite external marginalization.

- **Role of Family, Society, and Cultural Stigma**

Family rejection remains one of the most significant barriers to emotional and economic stability. Transgender youths disowned by families often struggle with homelessness and rely on alternative community support. Cultural stigma, deeply rooted in religious beliefs and social norms, perpetuates discrimination and isolates transgender persons from mainstream social life.

Public awareness campaigns and sensitization workshops by government and civil society aim to counter these prejudices but face resistance due to entrenched social attitudes and misinformation.

Empirical Data: Case Studies and Interviews from Lucknow

To deepen the understanding of the transgender community's current social status in Lucknow, this study conducted qualitative interviews with a sample of transgender individuals across different age groups and socio-economic backgrounds. The narratives gathered reveal complex intersections of personal resilience, societal challenges, and aspirations, illustrating the real-life implications of historical decline and contemporary legal frameworks.

• Case Study 1: The Struggle for Identity and Acceptance

Rani (name changed) is a 28-year-old hijra living in Jyoti Puram, Lucknow. Rani recalled her childhood with family rejection after expressing gender non-conformity early on. Forced to leave her home by age 16, she joined a *khanqah*, where she found communal support but struggled to access education and formal employment. Rani spoke about the pervasive stigma that trailed her daily life, from public harassment to difficulties in even basic activities like boarding public transport. Despite these challenges, she has taken vocational training through a local NGO and now works as a beautician, gaining a degree of economic independence.

Her narrative highlights the dual effects of family alienation and limited institutional support that many transgender youth face, underscoring the importance of community networks in survival and dignity building.

• Case Study 2: Legal Awareness and Advocacy

Another participant, Arjun, aged 35, is an activist and lawyer advocating for transgender rights in Lucknow. Arjun's experience illustrates the mixed impact of legal reforms. He commends the 2019 Transgender Persons Act for legitimizing transgender identities but criticizes the onerous bureaucratic hurdles involved in obtaining identity certification. Arjun has participated in government workshops educating transgender persons about their rights and filing complaints in cases of discrimination.

Arjun's story exemplifies the emerging leadership within the community aiming to bridge gaps between legal intent and social reality, promoting awareness and access to justice.

• Case Study 3: Health Challenges and Community Response

Salma, a 40-year-old transgender woman, narrated her journey with health challenges including gender-affirmative surgery complications and mental health struggles linked to prolonged discrimination. Salma described inadequate access to specialized medical services in Lucknow and reliance on informal networks for treatment.

She emphasized the critical role of NGO-led health camps and counseling programs that have provided crucial support. Salma campaigns for improved transgender healthcare facilities locally and better government health policy implementation.

Key Themes from Interviews

- **Social Exclusion and Economic Marginalization:** Participants uniformly reported difficulties securing stable employment and facing exclusion in public and private spheres.
- **Importance of Community Networks:** *Khanqahs* and transgender collectives serve as vital sources of shelter, emotional support, and advocacy.
- **Barriers to Legal and Medical Services:** Bureaucratic processes and lack of transgender-sensitive facilities obstruct access to rights and healthcare.
- **Resilience and Aspirations:** Despite adversities, individuals expressed hope and determination for better social acceptance and life opportunities, especially among younger generations.
- **Mental Health Concerns:** Psychological distress due to stigma, violence, and social isolation was a recurring issue requiring urgent attention.

Implications

These case studies underscore the need for integrated approaches combining legal reform, healthcare improvement, social inclusion initiatives, and community empowerment in Lucknow. They reveal gaps between policy and lived realities while highlighting the agency within the transgender community in navigating and contesting marginalization.

This study uses two complementary theoretical frameworks to analyze the declining social value system and current status of the transgender community in Lucknow: social stigma theory and human rights theory.

Social Stigma Theory

Social stigma theory explains how societal attitudes and cultural norms label certain groups as deviant or undesirable, leading to stereotyping, discrimination, and exclusion. Transgender persons often carry stigma due to their nonconformity to conventional gender binaries, resulting in negative social labeling. This stigma manifests in multiple social institutions, including family, education, employment, and healthcare, reproducing systemic barriers and marginalization.

In Lucknow, cultural and religious values historically shaped transgender identities with honor and specific roles but colonial and postcolonial social dynamics transformed these into symbols of impurity or threat. Stigma theory helps clarify how deeply rooted biases contributed to the erosion of transgender social status and continue to hinder acceptance despite legal protections.

Human Rights Framework

The human rights framework situates transgender identity and rights within the universal principles of dignity, equality, and non-discrimination enshrined in national and international covenants. This framework demands legal recognition of transgender persons' gender identities, protection from violence and discrimination, access to healthcare and education, and socioeconomic inclusion.

India's Supreme Court, through landmark judgments like NALSA, and legislation such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, invoke this framework to affirm transgender rights constitutionally. However, gaps between legal guarantees and their realization require continuous advocacy and reform.

Intersectionality

Additionally, an intersectional lens acknowledges how caste, class, religion, and geographic factors complicate transgender experiences. For example, transgender persons belonging to lower castes or rural areas often face compounded discrimination, limiting access to the benefits of legal progress.

Application

These theoretical frameworks provide a robust lens to understand the empirical findings of this study. Social stigma explains enduring discrimination despite formal rights, whereas the human rights framework offers normative justification for policy interventions. Intersectionality stresses the complexity and diversity within the community, guiding tailored approaches for social inclusion.

Success Stories and Positive Developments

Despite the numerous challenges faced by the transgender community in Lucknow and India at large, there have been important successes and positive developments that offer hope for a more inclusive future. These gains signify both resurgence in social recognition and legal empowerment, alongside increased visibility and activism within the community.

• Historical Recognition and Roles

Historically, as discussed earlier, transgender individuals held respected roles during the Mughal and Nawabi eras in Lucknow. They were integrated within the royal courts, entrusted with important administrative and advisory functions. This historical acceptance laid a cultural foundation that the contemporary community aspires to reclaim. The legacy of respect tied to religious and cultural participation also endures, as transgender persons continue to play significant roles in certain traditional ceremonies, blessing childbirths, and weddings, reinforcing societal acknowledgement of their unique identities.

• Legal Reforms and Judicial Milestones

India has witnessed groundbreaking legal developments affirming transgender rights, especially since the 2014 Supreme Court decision in the NALSA case which legally recognized transgender persons as a third gender. This was reinforced by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which provides a formal legal framework to prevent discrimination and promote social welfare.

These laws have created new institutional pathways for transgender inclusion in areas like education, employment, and healthcare. For example, governmental schemes now include scholarships for transgender students and skill development initiatives aimed at increasing employability. These legal protections have allowed more transgender individuals to access identity documents reflecting their true gender, facilitating wider social participation.

• Growing Visibility and Activism

Activism by transgender groups in Lucknow has grown significantly, marking a shift from invisibility to vocal advocacy. Community-based organizations organize campaigns for rights awareness, health education, and legal literacy, empowering transgender persons to claim their entitlements more effectively. Annual pride marches and cultural events in Lucknow create visibility and celebrate transgender identities, contributing to gradual changes in public perception.

Media representation has also improved, with films, documentaries, and social media influencers from the transgender community raising awareness and challenging stereotypes. Stories of transgender success in education, business, politics, and entertainment serve as inspiring examples to society and younger transgender persons.

• Government Welfare Initiatives

Several government programs support transgender welfare, including reservation policies in some states, social security pensions, and healthcare initiatives. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's establishment of a National Council for Transgender Persons provides oversight and guidance for these programs. In Lucknow, local NGOs facilitate access to such schemes, enabling community members to pursue education and vocational training, thereby improving economic independence.

• Education and Vocational Training Successes

There is a slowly rising trend of transgender youth in Lucknow accessing higher education, breaking traditional barriers. Vocational training centers run by NGOs equip transgender individuals with skills for employment in sectors like beauty and wellness, tailoring, and hospitality. Such initiatives reduce dependency on begging and sex work, traditionally the only sources of income for many in the community.

• Mental Health and Community Cohesion

Community resilience is evident in mutual aid groups and shared cultural spaces such as khanqahs, which provide psychosocial support and a sense of belonging. Peer counseling and mental health awareness programs organized by

NGOs help address trauma and build coping mechanisms. This communal solidarity enhances self-esteem and collective bargaining power.

These successes collectively mark a positive trajectory toward restoring dignity and equitable inclusion of transgender persons in Lucknow and beyond. However, sustained efforts are necessary to translate these gains into widespread social acceptance and empowerment.

Discussion

This study reveals a complex, multifaceted depiction of the declining social value system regarding the transgender community in Lucknow. Rooted historically in positions of respect and influence during the Mughal and Nawabi periods, the community's stature was severely undermined through British colonial criminalization and Victorian morality impositions. These historical shifts laid the foundation for persistent stigma, exclusion, and marginalization that are reflected in contemporary social dynamics and institutional frameworks.

• Interpretation of Findings

The empirical data from interviews and case studies depict transgender persons experiencing significant barriers across education, employment, healthcare, and social acceptance. The deeply entrenched stigma highlighted is consistent with social stigma theory, which explains how cultural norms and prejudices systemically disadvantage groups diverging from dominant identities. The historical valorization of transgender identities contrasts starkly with today's social exclusion, revealing how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary attitudes and practices.

The human rights framework, while foundational to recent legal reforms, remains unevenly implemented in practice. The gap between constitutional guarantees and lived realities manifests in bureaucratic hurdles like identity certification, inadequate legal protections against violence, and insufficient welfare outreach. This disconnect sustains socioeconomic disparities and perpetuates vulnerability.

Despite these challenges, resilience and agency within the transgender community stand out. Mutual aid, cultural cohesion through *khanqahs*, and increasing activism illustrate a collective effort to reclaim social dignity and rights. Legal milestones and growing visibility represent tangible successes, though these are just initial steps on a longer journey toward full inclusion.

• Comparison with Other Contexts

The experiences of transgender persons in Lucknow resonate with global patterns of LGBTQ+ marginalization, especially in post-colonial societies where imported legal and moral codes have disrupted indigenous gender traditions. However, the embedding of transgender identities within deeply spiritual and cultural frameworks in India provides unique opportunities for cultural revival and revalorization.

Comparatively, countries like Nepal and Bangladesh have made different legal and social advances, with Nepal allowing self-identification of gender without medical or bureaucratic prerequisites. Analyses of such models can inform India's path forward, especially in simplifying legal recognition processes and strengthening affirmative action.

• Implications for Policy and Society

Findings underscore the necessity of bridging gaps between legislation and field realities through stronger enforcement, targeted outreach, and inclusive governance. Culturally sensitive public education campaigns to dismantle stigma are crucial. Empowering local transgender leadership and integrating their voices in policymaking can ensure responsive and sustainable social interventions.

Policy must also address intersectionality by prioritizing the compound hardships faced by transgender persons from marginalized castes and rural backgrounds. Inclusive education policies, healthcare provision tailored to transgender needs, and economic integration programs are essential components.

• Significance for the Transgender Community

This study highlights the continuing struggles faced by transgender persons in reclaiming their social value and rights. Yet, it equally emphasizes the community's resilience, evolving identities, and contributions to cultural diversity. Understanding these dynamics is critical for academics, policymakers, and activists aiming to foster equity and dignity.

Recommendations

Drawing on the comprehensive analysis of historical evolution, contemporary challenges, and social dynamics of the transgender community in Lucknow, this research paper proposes the following recommendations to address the declining social value system and improve inclusion, rights, and dignity.

Strengthen Legal Enforcement and Simplify Procedures

- 1. Streamline Legal Gender Recognition:** Revise the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, to remove bureaucratic obstacles in self-identification processes, eliminating the requirement for district magistrate certification. Facilitate easier, confidential, and faster legal recognition of gender identity.
- 2. Enhance Protection Against Violence:** Implement stringent legal measures and establish dedicated mechanisms within police departments to investigate and address violence against transgender individuals promptly, ensuring sensitivity training for law enforcement officials.
- 3. Monitor Policy Implementation:** Establish local oversight bodies in Lucknow to regularly monitor and report on the implementation status of transgender-related policies and schemes, involving transgender community representatives in decision-making.

Expand Education and Employment Opportunities

4. **Inclusive Education:** Incorporate transgender issues into school and college curricula to foster tolerance from an early age. Ensure schools have gender-neutral facilities and anti-bullying policies to support transgender students.
5. **Vocational Training and Job Reservations:** Implement reservations in government jobs for transgender persons and expand vocational skill development programs, focusing on emerging sectors such as technology, hospitality, and creative arts. Promote partnerships with private sector employers to facilitate workplace inclusion.

Improve Healthcare Services

6. **Access to Gender-Affirmative Healthcare:** Develop specialized clinics in Lucknow offering gender-affirmative medical and psychological services. Train healthcare professionals in transgender health to reduce stigma and improve service quality.
7. **Mental Health Support:** Increase availability of counseling and mental health services tailored to transgender persons, including peer support networks and trauma-informed care.

Promote Social Inclusion and Awareness

8. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch sustained media and community campaigns to challenge stereotypes and promote positive representations of transgender persons. Involve religious and cultural leaders to endorse messages of inclusion.
9. **Family and Community Sensitization:** Conduct workshops and outreach programs targeting families and community members to reduce rejection and promote acceptance of transgender persons within households and neighborhoods.

Empower Community Organizations

10. **Support Local NGOs and Collectives:** Provide funding and capacity-building resources to transgender-led organizations engaged in education, advocacy, healthcare, and legal aid in Lucknow.
11. **Inclusive Governance:** Ensure transgender representation in local governance structures and policy planning committees to reflect community needs and perspectives.

These recommendations emphasize a multi-sectoral approach integrating legal reform, education, health, social attitudes, and community empowerment. Coordinated efforts by government, civil society, and transgender communities themselves will be essential to restore the societal value and human dignity of transgender persons in Lucknow and beyond.

Please confirm to proceed with the Conclusion section (300-400 words).## Conclusion

The transgender community in Lucknow has undergone significant transformations historically, moving from respected social positions during the Mughal and Nawabi eras to marginalization under British colonial rule. Despite considerable progress through recent legal reforms and increasing activism, transgender persons continue to face entrenched social stigma, discrimination, and systemic barriers in accessing education, employment, healthcare, and justice.

This research highlights the complex interplay of historical legacies, social attitudes, and policy frameworks shaping the contemporary lived realities of transgender individuals in Lucknow. Empirical data reveal persistent exclusion and vulnerabilities, yet also underscore the remarkable resilience and community solidarity sustained through cultural ties, mutual support, and activism.

Legal recognition via the NALSA judgment and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, marks an important step toward redressing historic injustices. However, gaps between formal law and social practice remain substantial. Addressing these requires sustained, holistic approaches that combine rigorous legal enforcement, poverty alleviation, inclusive education, gender-affirmative healthcare, and public sensitization.

Empowering transgender persons through education, vocational training, and meaningful participation in governance will be critical to reversing the declining social value system. Governments, civil society, and communities must collaborate to ensure transgender rights transition from legal rhetoric to lived realities.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge needed to inform such efforts in Lucknow and similar socio-cultural contexts. Future research should continue to document diverse transgender experiences, explore intersectional vulnerabilities, and evaluate the impact of evolving policies, ultimately fostering a society that respects and embraces gender diversity in all its forms.

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