

## SURVEY ON PERCEPTION OF YOUTH REGARDING TRANSGENDER AND THEIR LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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### ABSTRACT

*The Merriam Webster defines leadership as- “the capacity to lead.” A good leader should inspire and bring out the best in the individuals led by them. Gender and leadership roles in today’s time are often viewed from male and or female gender. However, there are inspiring examples of individuals of transgender which are undervalued or are obscure to the masses. We conducted a quantitative survey amongst college students aged between 20-30 years old. Through the survey it was found that people are aware of the male and female leaders but not the leaders from transgender section of the society. In order to bring equality and equity among not only the male and female genders but also the transgender, an awareness of the leaders and their inspiring stories needs to be popularized. This paper therefore highlights the awareness level of the society regarding gender and leadership roles and states briefly about one story of leadership from all the three genders.*

### INTRODUCTION

People who defy gender norms have existed in every culture throughout time. However, the term ‘transgender’ is relatively new, dating to the mid 1990s. Transgender is an umbrella term which includes Transsexuals, cross-dressers and people who feel like their biological sex fails to reflect their true gender.

People from transgender community are often excluded from social and cultural life. They are denied of their place in economy, politics and decision making processes. They are often shunned by the society and their rights have often been restricted. This violates Articles 14, 15, 16 and 21 of the Constitution of India. Since people of this community fail to receive proper education and employment, many of them take to dancing at social functions or begging. Some are even engaged as sex workers. In a landmark judgement in April 2014, the Supreme Court created the third gender status for this community. The bench of the judges said, “Recognition of ‘transgender’ as a third gender is not a social or medical issue but a human right issue. Transgenders are also citizen of India. The spirit of the Constitution is to provide equal opportunity to every citizen to grow and attain their potential, irrespective of caste, religion or gender.” Despite of such laws, transgender and gender-nonconforming people often run into unnecessary barriers that make their jobs harder than they need to be.

Leadership has been a topic of human experience since people formed groups to get through the threats of environment, other groups of people, dangerous animals etc. and to work co-operatively to achieve goals beyond the abilities of individuals and create families and various social groups to satisfy affiliative needs. The goal of this paper is to promote equality among human beings irrespective of their gender. It emphasizes the acceptance of one’s genuine choice of identity. Through awareness it stresses on giving equal opportunities of leadership to transgenders as well.

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Gender and sex are two terms often used interchangeably. However, both these terms have different meanings. Sex is derived from the Latin word ‘sexus’ which means ‘gonads’ or ‘potential gonads’. Robert Stoller in 1960s suggested that the terminology ‘sex’ should be used to refer to physical differences between man and woman. Terms such as female sex or male sex refer to biological aspect. “sex” refers to the physical attributes such as presence of specific external sex organs and definite sex chromosomes. On basis of these attributes, when we say ‘this is a male child’ or ‘this is a female child.’

Gender, on the other hand, is quite different. Gender is derived from the Latin word ‘genus’ meaning ‘type’ or

‘sort’. According to Browne, gender refers to the culturally and socially constructed differences between the male sex and the female sex. It refers to the way in which society encourages and teaches the two sexes to behave in different ways through socialization.

Thus, while sex is a term concerned with physical characteristics, gender refers to attitudes and behavior that depends upon the expectation from society. Gender, thus, refers to the attitudes and behavior that depend upon the expectation from society. Gender thus, refers to the socially determined ideas and practices of what is to be a male or female. The central aspect of gender is gender identity. Gender identity is the self image that one has about one’s own gender as a masculine, feminine or otherwise. However, this is not true for everyone. Some people with male biology feel strongly feminine and some with female biology feel themselves to be masculine. It is important to remember that gender is a malleable and variable category.

About, 1 to 1.7% children are born with variation in sex characteristics and they cannot be classified as male or female. Such conditions are called as intersex conditions. The older term for this condition, Hermaphroditism, came from the names of the Greek God and Goddess, Hermes and Aphrodite. Hermes was the God of male sexuality and Aphrodite was the name of female sexuality.

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity, gender behavior or expression does not conform to the behavior typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Psychiatrist John Oliven of Columbia University used the term ‘Transgender’ in 1965 in his work ‘Sexual Hygiene and Pathology’. Addressing transgender people the way they prefer to be addressed (including chosen name and preferred pronouns) demonstrates respect. Some transgender individuals may choose to use gender neutral pronouns), such as ‘ze/hir/hirs.’

## **METHODOLOGY**

The idea of the survey was qualitative. At first, it was done to include ‘transgender’ as part of the discussions relating to gender and then to create equity amongst not only the two genders of male and female but also the seldom addressed – transgender. A validated questionnaire was made to examine the minds of the youth concerning the social awareness and acceptance of the transgender community. The data was collected using an online survey which comprised of six questions.

People’s knowledge about the meaning of the term ‘transgender’, their stand in the society and their willingness to make transgender individuals as part of our society and as leaders was questioned. The survey also enquired about the steps that people would take to improve the social condition of the individuals of transgender community.

### **Tool used for the survey:**

1. What do you understand by term ‘transgender’?
2. Do you think the society gives equal and fair opportunity to the transgender?
3. Are you willing to send your child to a school where the teacher is a transgender?
4. Do you know who Joyita Mondal is?
5. Do you think that the rights of transgender are well implemented in our society?
6. What would you do to support the growth of transgenders in the society?

## **RESULTS:**

Out of 66 respondents, only 53% knew the exact meaning of term transgender, 90.91% believe that society fails to give equal and fair opportunity to them, and 83.33% think despite of rights being made in our constitution, these are not well implemented. On a positive note, the youth presents their acceptance towards transgenders as 93.94% of them gave a thumbs up when asked if they will send their child to a school where teacher is a transgender. “Treat them the same I treat other human beings and not show any prejudice against them”; “Their

acceptance without judgement, equal rights and its implementation, job opportunities in various sectors (security, public speaking, NGOs, teaching, etc.)” , “Support them”, “Equal rights”, “Social awareness” etc. are the responses received when asked about the steps that they will take to improve the social condition of people belonging to transgender community.

### CONCLUSION

Every person has different set of identities, whether they are visible or not, these identities should be welcomed , explored and empowered. When we sit down and try to solve the world’s most complex problems, we are truly bringing diversity of thoughts to the conversation. It is at the intersection of lived experiences-both personal and professional-that the greatest solutions, the greatest thought and the greatest conversations take place.

When we discuss gender equality we generally focus on equal rights for males and females. Transgender equality also needs consideration because transgender people face high levels of discrimination and violence. Despite the challenges that transgender people face with respect to merging with the mainstream, there has been some cases where grit and determination has helped transgender people prove their worth. Their stories and their achievements needs to be told more often.

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