

Notification No: 587/2025

Name of Scholar: Sayantika Sen

Date of Award: 10.10.2025

Name of Supervisor: Prof Vani Narula

Name of Department: Social Work

Topic of Research: Identifying Vulnerabilities of Transgender Community during COVID 19 Lockdown: An Ex Post Facto Thesis

Findings

The study provides a comprehensive understanding of how the COVID-19 lockdown profoundly impacted the transgender community in India, intensifying pre-existing social, economic, psychological, and health vulnerabilities. Through qualitative thematic analysis, it reveals that the pandemic not only exposed but also magnified the community's marginalization, exclusion, and struggles for survival and dignity.

Economically, transgender individuals—largely dependent on informal livelihoods such as begging, sex work, and ceremonial blessings—suffered devastating income losses as lockdown restrictions halted mobility and social gatherings. With minimal access to formal employment, social protection, or government welfare due to systemic discrimination and lack of valid identification, many were pushed into extreme poverty. Institutional neglect and exclusion from relief measures deepened these inequalities, leaving the community largely invisible in state responses.

Healthcare vulnerability was equally severe. With the health system prioritizing COVID-19 care, routine and essential services were disrupted, cutting off access to gender-affirming treatments such as hormone therapy and surgeries. This led to physical discomfort and emotional distress. Discrimination in hospitals further discouraged many from seeking care. Meanwhile, mental health support—already scarce before the pandemic—became nearly inaccessible, compounding psychological suffering.

Socially and psychologically, the lockdown exacerbated isolation, anxiety, and depression. Many transgender persons were confined with unsupportive or abusive families, facing violence and emotional trauma. The closure of community spaces eliminated crucial peer support networks, deepening loneliness and helplessness. Violence and discrimination also surged during this period, while the limited operations of NGOs and support organizations left many without safety nets or access to justice.

Despite immense hardship, the community's resilience and solidarity were striking. Peer networks, gharanas, and local leaders organized mutual aid—sharing food, medicine, and financial resources. NGOs and LGBTQIA+ organizations provided relief drives, tele-counselling, and awareness campaigns. Digital platforms became emotional and informational lifelines, while creative expression, spirituality, and caregiving strengthened coping capacities.

The pandemic served as both a mirror and a magnifier of inequality, highlighting the community's struggles and extraordinary resilience, and underscoring the urgent need for policies that enable transgender individuals to live with dignity, stability, and respect.