

The Informalisation of Transgender Livelihoods in India: Social Exclusion, Economic Precarity and Barriers to Formal Employment

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Received: 9 September 2026 / Accepted: 17 September 2026 / Published online: 21 September 2026
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Abstract

The economic marginalisation of transgender persons in India and their exclusion from formal-sector employment are closely connected to their exclusion from mainstream social and institutional structures. Although legal and policy developments have increasingly recognised the rights of transgender persons, access to secure and dignified livelihoods remains uneven.

This paper examines the informalisation of transgender livelihoods shaped by discrimination, educational disadvantage, family rejection, barriers to formal employment and social exclusion. It further examines the forms of informal and precarious livelihoods through which transgender persons navigate the limited economic opportunities and the consequences of such informalisation for their economic security and social inclusion. Rather than treating engagement in informal occupations as an individual choice, the paper conceptualises it as an outcome of limited opportunities within the formal job market. Due to discrimination in recruitment and workplaces and exclusion from education and social support, the majority of them are concentrated in community-based traditional, informal forms of livelihood, including *Badhai*, ritual begging and sex work, with some who are self-employed.

The study adopts a mixed-methods secondary data approach, drawing both quantitative and qualitative data from research articles, government and institutional reports, legal documents, and policy literature on transgender livelihoods and employment in India. The literature is thematically analysed through the framework of

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social exclusion to examine the relationship between barriers to formal employment, livelihood informalisation, and economic precarity.

The paper views the informalisation of transgender livelihoods as the cumulative effect of exclusion across family, education, community, and employment institutions, as a result of which the viable economic choices available to transgender persons are narrowed down. The paper concludes that meaningful economic inclusion requires a shift from viewing informal livelihoods as isolated occupational outcomes towards understanding them as manifestations of broader structures of social and economic exclusion.

Keywords: Transgender persons, informalisation, livelihoods, social exclusion, economic precarity, employment discrimination, labour market

Introduction

Access to work is not merely a means of securing income; it is also closely related to dignity, social recognition, autonomy, and participation in social life. For transgender persons, however, entry into and stability within the labour market are shaped by forms of exclusion that extend beyond the recruitment process and the workplace itself. Educational disadvantage, family rejection, social stigma, discrimination in recruitment and difficulties in the process of identity documentation can restrict their access to stable employment. A study across 14 states of India, for example, found that transgender persons experienced exclusion in education and had precarious livelihoods, with 35% relying on sex work, begging, or ritualistic practices (**Aggarwal et al. 2026**). This raises an important question: is informal work an occupational choice for transgender persons, or is it because of exclusion from formal-sector economic institutions? Informalisation, in this context, refers not merely to the existence of informal jobs but to a process through which limited access to formal employment pushes transgender persons towards occupations that provide low and unstable income, limited or no social security, weak employment protections, and greater exposure to stigma and exploitation. The findings of a study by **Fernandez & Gaitonde (2024)** based on transgender persons in Kerala indicate that their disadvantageous position in the job market and subsequent dependence on precarious forms of work are caused by their discrimination and poor learning outcomes.

In the Indian context, historically, there has been a complex relationship between social marginalisation of transgender persons and community-based economic practices that has impacted their livelihoods. Occupations such as *Badhai* (ritual performance and blessing), ritual begging, and sex work have been the traditional livelihood for indigenous transgender communities such as *Hijra* and *Kinnar*. Over time, these occupations started to be seen as culturally predetermined features of transgender life, which reproduced stereotypes that contribute to their marginalisation. The issue is further complicated by the persistence of discrimination within formal employment, which operates at multiple stages: recruitment, selection, workplace interaction, promotion, remuneration, and job retention. A transgender person may possess educational qualifications or vocational skills and still encounter employers who reject them or customers who are unwilling to interact with them because of their gender identity. Thus, employability cannot be understood exclusively in terms of individual skills or qualifications. The social organisation of the labour market

determines whose skills are recognised, whose bodies and identities are considered acceptable, and who is permitted to participate in economically valued work on equal terms.

Such exclusion has repercussions on transgender persons that extend beyond income. Informal and survival-based livelihoods reinforce social stigma and expose them to increased economic insecurity. A study on transgender persons in Delhi-NCR found that participation in survival economies such as sex work and begging was associated with poorer outcomes across several dimensions of social inclusion, such as in healthcare, etc. (**Raja & Khan, 2025**). The study argues that intersectional disadvantages related to gender, education, and income increase the economic dependency of transgender persons, and slowly they become socially invisible.

The relationship between legal recognition and material inclusion is also crucial in contemporary India. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026, introduces provisions concerning forced transgender identity and exploitation, including forced engagement in begging, servitude, or bonded labour. These changes make the relationship between legal recognition, institutional regulation, and economic inclusion an especially significant area of inquiry. There seems to be a continuing disjuncture between formal rights and lived experiences of economic and social exclusion (**Bhattacharya et al., 2022**). The central issue, therefore, is not whether transgender persons are legally recognised as citizens of the country but whether such recognition translates into opportunities for them to secure dignified and sustainable livelihoods.

The paper situates the informalisation of transgender livelihoods within a broader chain of exclusion caused by family boycott, lack of access to education, stigma, restricted access to formal employment and workplace discrimination. However, at the same time, transgender persons should not only be portrayed as passive victims of structural exclusion, as their participation in informal work can also involve agency, community networks, economic calculation, and strategies of survival and autonomy.

Review of Literature

Historical and Sociocultural Foundations of Transgender Livelihoods

Nanda (1999) discusses the economic organisation of *Hijra* life, demonstrating that livelihood cannot be separated from the community's social and cultural institutions. **Reddy (2005)** describes *Hijras* as a homogeneous and permanently marginalised population. Her analysis of the local "economy of respect" is particularly useful for understanding livelihood because economic activity is embedded within wider relations of status, recognition, morality, and community belonging. Together, Nanda and Reddy demonstrate that livelihood among *Hijras* has historically been connected to culturally specific institutions rather than being reducible to individual economic deprivation.

A contemporary analysis of transgender livelihoods needs to distinguish between community-specific livelihood traditions and the broader labour-market experiences of transgender persons.

Nayak & Panda (2021), in their study of *Hijras* in Odisha, demonstrate changes in their livelihood patterns and identity, including attempts by some *Hijras* to expand their economic opportunities and strive for greater acceptance in mainstream society. The study suggests that transgender persons have begun to search for other livelihood opportunities rather than merely performing predetermined occupational roles,

suggesting that they exercise agency, despite structural marginalisation. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because it prevents informalisation from being conceptualised as an inevitable consequence of transgender identity.

Social Exclusion and Barriers to Formal Employment

A study by **Bhattacharya et al. (2022)** uses the concept of “substantive access to rights”. Their study argues that formal legal recognition does not necessarily translate into the practical ability to exercise rights. Based on accounts of 15 transgender persons, they identify persistent barriers across family, education, work, healthcare, and public spaces. If exclusion occurs first within families and educational institutions, individuals may enter adulthood with fewer qualifications, weaker social networks, and reduced economic resources. Formal employment then becomes more difficult to access. Their analysis demonstrates a gap between the formal prohibition of discrimination and actual access to mainstream employment. Legal prohibitions alone cannot eliminate the exclusion of transgender persons from formal employment.

Literature also indicates that exclusion in education is closely linked to later economic disadvantage. **Aggarwal et al. (2026)**, in their study, find that pervasive educational exclusion among transgender persons, school dropout, bullying, discrimination, and family rejection are factors restricting later access to higher education and formal employment. Thus, employment disadvantage should not be treated as an isolated labour-market phenomenon; it is partly the accumulated outcome of exclusion across the life course.

Informal Livelihoods, Economic Precarity and Survival Economies

A third strand of literature deals more directly with the relationship between transgender identity and informal or survival-based livelihoods. Research and institutional studies (**Kerala Development Society [KDS], 2017**) have repeatedly documented substantial involvement of transgender persons in occupations such as ritual begging, *badhai*, sex work, and sales work, while formal employment was comparatively limited. Such evidence is valuable in establishing the empirical importance of informal livelihoods.

More recent research has provided a more nuanced interpretation of these patterns. **Pradhan & Paltasingh’s (2023)** sociological analysis of livelihood issues argues that transgender persons experience institutionalised biases in sectors of education and employment and face challenges in both formal and informal economies. They also emphasise transgender persons’ vulnerability to exploitation within existing livelihood settings. A recent study by **Raja & Khan (2025)** based on 335 transgender persons in Delhi-NCR indicates that survival-based occupations also create challenges in their social inclusion across several dimensions and that education and income function as important protective factors.

The emerging literature suggests that informal work should be analysed simultaneously as a site of constraint and a site of agency. The literature does not support a simple claim that transgender persons are “confined” to informal work. Rather, it can be said that while there is structural difficulty in accessing formal employment, informal occupations continue to provide at least survival-based, although often insecure, livelihood options.

The COVID-19 period further exposed this vulnerability. **Acharya et al. (2023)** researched transgender migrant women in India and found that the pandemic severely

disrupted whatever informal livelihoods they were dependent on and heightened existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities among them. The pandemic thus provides further evidence that dependence on informal and precarious work increases possibilities of economic crisis because such workers frequently lack stable employment protections and social security.

Legal Recognition, Rights and Economic Inclusion

The Supreme Court's National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) vs. Union of India judgement of 2014 represented a major constitutional recognition of transgender rights, including recognition of their gender identity and directions concerning social and economic inclusion. However, the question is whether formal legal recognition has produced equivalent changes in everyday institutional practices.

Bhattacharya et al. (2022) provide one of the clearest formulations of this problem through their distinction between legal rights and substantive access to rights. Their analysis suggests that the existence of legal protections is insufficient when structural and institutional mechanisms prevent marginalised groups from exercising those rights in practice. This distinction is particularly important for employment because formal provisions established to prevent discrimination of transgender persons do not automatically alter recruitment practices, workplace cultures, employer attitudes, or the educational inequalities that shape employability.

The literature also indicates that legal reform can have unintended limitations when it is not accompanied by institutional support. **Pandey & Sivakami (2022)**, for example, critically examined the inclusiveness of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act and drew attention to the continuing economic vulnerability of transgender persons, including dependence on begging, *badhai*, and sex work. Their work is particularly useful because it brings the question of rights into conversation with the everyday economic conditions of transgender persons.

The relevance of this literature has increased with the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026. Existing scholarship on the 2019 Act necessarily predates this amendment and therefore cannot assess its longer-term socioeconomic consequences. This raises questions about whether changes in legal recognition and institutional regulation will translate into improved access to formal employment and sustainable livelihoods.

Research Gap

Three gaps are evident from the above review of literature.

First, studies of transgender persons often examine health, stigma, identity, or legal rights, while employment and livelihood are treated as one component among several. Even studies specifically addressing livelihoods frequently analyse the existing traditional occupational patterns among transgender persons without fully explaining the mechanisms through which exclusion from formal employment produces informalisation.

Second, there is insufficient conceptual demarcation between informal work as an occupational category and informalisation as a social process. The widespread presence of transgender persons in begging, sex work, ritual occupations, casual labour, or self-employment does not by itself explain why they enter those occupations. The literature increasingly points towards structural constraints, but comparatively less attention has been given to identifying the sequence connecting family exclusion, educational disadvantage, employment discrimination,

and restricted formal opportunities, which eventually causes the informalisation of their livelihood.

Research Objectives

The study aims to examine the major social, educational, institutional, and labour-market barriers that restrict transgender persons' access to formal employment in India. It seeks to analyse how social exclusion contributes to the informalisation of their livelihoods. It further aims to identify the forms of informal and precarious livelihoods reported among transgender persons and the factors contributing to their engagement in such livelihoods. Finally, the study seeks to assess how livelihood informalisation affects their economic security and broader social inclusion.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical perspective guiding this study is Social Exclusion Theory, particularly the work of **Hilary Silver (1994)**. Silver conceptualises social exclusion as a multidimensional process through which individuals or groups are prevented from participating fully in social, economic, and institutional life. She identifies three major paradigms of exclusion: solidarity, specialisation, and monopoly, and emphasises that exclusion can operate through economic as well as social relationships. These paradigms explain the different dimensions of transgender exclusion. Solidarity relates to family and social rejection, specialisation to unequal access to education and formal employment, and monopoly to institutional control over economic opportunities and resources. Together, these forms of exclusion help explain how transgender persons may be pushed towards informal and precarious livelihoods.

This perspective is particularly appropriate for the present study because the informalisation of transgender livelihoods cannot be adequately explained by examining employment alone. Transgender persons also experience exclusion from family, education, employment, financial institutions, and welfare systems, and these disadvantages together restrict access to formal economic opportunities. Thus, social exclusion theory enables the study to examine informalisation as a structurally produced outcome of unequal access to institutions and resources, rather than simply as an individual occupational choice.

In this framework, barriers to formal employment are understood as part of a wider process of exclusion. Educational disadvantage may reduce access to qualifications; discrimination may restrict recruitment and workplace participation; and institutional barriers may further limit access to economic resources. These interconnected exclusions diminish the range of livelihood options available and increase dependence on informal or precarious work.

The second theoretical perspective employed in the study is **Goffman's (1963) Stigma Theory**. Goffman conceptualises stigma as a socially discrediting attribute through which individuals may be reduced from socially accepted persons to a devalued or discredited identity. Goffman's perspective is relevant because transgender persons' exclusion from formal employment can occur through social perceptions and everyday interactions, not only through formal institutional rules. Gender identity may become a basis for stereotyping, discrimination, social distancing, or questioning an individual's suitability for particular forms of employment. Such processes can operate during recruitment as well as within workplaces.

Stigma theory, therefore, complements Social Exclusion Theory. While Silver helps explain the broader structural and institutional processes that restrict transgender

persons' participation in economic life, Goffman helps explain how social devaluation and stigma operate at the interpersonal level. Together, these perspectives provide a stronger explanation of why formal legal recognition does not necessarily translate into equal employment opportunities. This combination is directly relevant to the central argument of the paper: that the informalisation and economic precarity of transgender livelihoods are not inherent characteristics of transgender identity but are shaped by wider processes of social exclusion, stigma, and unequal access to formal employment.

Results and Findings

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative secondary evidence reveals a consistent pattern of labour-market exclusion and livelihood insecurity among transgender persons in India. The findings indicate that disadvantages in education, family support, and institutional access intersect with employment discrimination, contributing to dependence on informal and survival-oriented livelihoods. At the same time, the evidence demonstrates occupational diversity and agency among transgender persons, indicating that informalisation should not be understood as a uniform or inevitable outcome.

Barriers to Formal Employment

The reviewed evidence identifies educational exclusion, family rejection, workplace discrimination, and institutional barriers as major factors restricting transgender persons' access to formal employment. A study by **Aggarwal et al. (2026)** covering transgender and MSM populations across 14 Indian states found that transgender participants experienced educational exclusion, limited family support, and precarious livelihoods. Among the transgender participants, 30.1% were employed in the private sector, 13% in unskilled labour, 5.3% in skilled labour, and 6.6% in self-employment, while 35.1% were engaged in sex work, begging, or ritualistic occupations and 7.5% were unemployed.

Qualitative evidence helps explain why formal employment remains difficult to access. In the same study by **Aggarwal et al. (2026)**, participants described educational disruption and discrimination as barriers to formal employment. One participant explained that some community members did not want to undertake ritual-based work but nevertheless had to do so "for survival". Similarly, another study of transgender and gender-diverse persons in Mumbai and Chennai found that participants experienced gender policing, bullying, and lack of institutional support in educational settings. Some participants reported leaving school because of such experiences (**Chakrapani et al., 2022**). However, evidence from qualitative research among Hijra participants also demonstrates that educational attainment does not necessarily guarantee employment. **Mondal et al. (2020)** documented the experience of an educated transgender participant who reported being rejected from several jobs because employers believed her presence would create discomfort among other workers. Thus, exclusion from formal employment occurs through multiple, interconnected mechanisms rather than through recruitment discrimination alone. Educational disruption can restrict qualifications and employment opportunities, while stigma and discriminatory attitudes can continue to affect individuals even when they possess educational credentials.

Social Exclusion and the Informalisation of Livelihoods

The evidence indicates a strong relationship between social exclusion and dependence on informal or survival-oriented livelihoods. It is evident from the 14-state study by

Aggarwal et al. (2026) that 35.1% of transgender participants were engaged in sex work, begging, or ritualistic occupations, compared with smaller proportions in skilled labour and self-employment.

Qualitative research provides important context for understanding these occupational patterns. A study of transgender women in India reported that some participants with educational qualifications nevertheless remained unable to obtain employment and described sex work or begging as having become necessary livelihood options. One participant with a BSc in Nursing reported being unable to secure employment because of being transgender (**Gomes de Jesus et al. 2020**). A study based in Uttarakhand similarly reported that transgender women who had traditionally engaged in occupations such as *badhai* increasingly turned towards sex work or begging in the context of educational disruption, unequal employment opportunities, and economic difficulties. The study also connects school dropout with bullying and discrimination in educational institutions (**Khapre et al. 2024**).

Another study from Chennai provides another dimension of this process. Participants described being subjected to discrimination in schools and workplaces, including underpayment and excessive workloads. One participant reported that transgender persons were often perceived as suitable only for begging, illustrating how occupational stereotypes can themselves reinforce economic exclusion (**Kumar et al. 2022**).

Thus, informalisation appears closely associated with restricted access to mainstream employment opportunities. However, the findings do not suggest that every transgender person engaged in informal work does so involuntarily. Rather, informal livelihoods appear to emerge through a combination of structural constraint, limited alternatives, community networks, and individual adaptation.

Forms of Informal and Precarious Livelihoods

The secondary evidence identifies certain forms of informal livelihood pursued by transgender persons. These include sex work, begging, ritual-based occupations such as *badhai/mangti*, unskilled labour and self-employment. *Badhai* is the community tradition of transgender persons in India, where they give song and dance performances at occasions of weddings and childbirths. *Badhai* is the source of livelihood for them, as the families where they perform *Badhai* give them money, gold, food, clothes, etc. Survival-oriented occupations remain important for some sections of the community. *Mangti* is another community tradition of transgender persons wherein they seek money at traffic signals, bus stands, railway stations, etc.

A recent study of 12 transgender persons examining post-lockdown socioeconomic experiences found an occupational movement from survival strategies such as sex work and seeking alms (*mangti*) during the lockdown towards traditional occupations such as *badhai* and giving paid dance performances after the lockdown (**Preeti & Kaur, 2026**). Participants reported that the shift provided some economic relief, but many also expressed dissatisfaction with traditional occupational roles. It demonstrates that livelihood patterns can change in response to economic circumstances. Traditional occupations may provide a degree of community-based economic security while simultaneously being experienced as restrictive or undesirable.

Thus, it can be said that transgender livelihoods exist along a continuum ranging from relatively mainstream employment to highly precarious survival activities. Informalisation therefore represents not a single occupational category but a range of

economic arrangements characterised by varying degrees of security, autonomy, and institutional protection.

Consequences for Economic Security and Social Inclusion

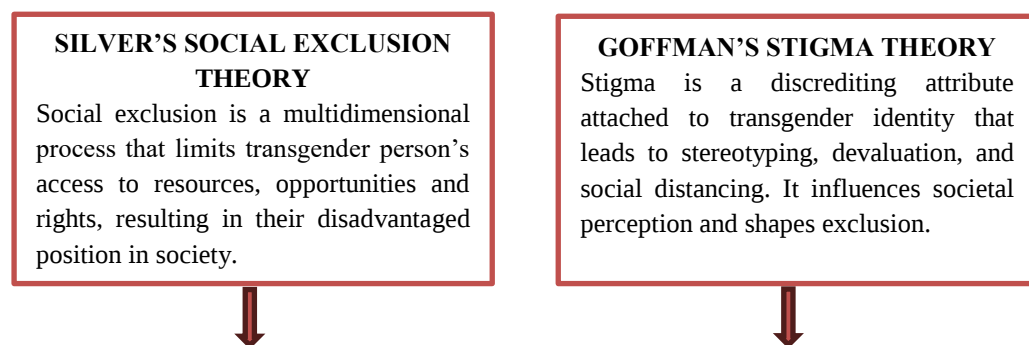
Raja & Khan's (2025) study of 335 transgender persons found that participation in survival economies, specifically sex work and begging, was negatively associated with social inclusion across multiple dimensions. The study examined ten dimensions of social inclusion and found poorer outcomes among participants engaged in survival economies, while education and income were associated with more favourable outcomes. Livelihood insecurity extends beyond income. Participation in survival economies was associated with disadvantages in areas such as social acceptance, healthcare access, dignity of labour, and civic and cultural participation. In a related analysis (**Raja & Khan, 2026**), transgender sex workers were significantly less likely to report positive experiences across the examined dimensions of social inclusion.

Economic insecurity further intersects with stigma and institutional vulnerability. A study of 68 transgender sex workers in Maharashtra found that stigma and violence associated with transgender identity and sex work intersected with economic and housing insecurity, employment discrimination, and poverty (**Ganju & Saggurti, 2017**). These disadvantages reinforced one another across individual, community, and institutional levels. Thus, it can be said that limited family support and precarious livelihoods are important features of transgender persons' experiences. They frequently rely on peers and community networks for support where family support is inadequate.

Livelihood informalisation is therefore associated not only with employment and income insecurity but also with broader forms of social exclusion. Economic precarity can restrict access to social and institutional resources, while stigma attached to certain informal occupations can further undermine social acceptance and dignity.

Discussion

Figure 1: The Informalisation of Transgender Livelihoods in India



SOURCES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF TRANSGENDER PERSONS

- Socio-cultural factors (stigma, prejudice, transphobia, gender normativity, social distancing and marginalisation)
- Family and community factors (family rejection, lack of emotional and financial support and community-level discrimination)
- Educational exclusion (bullying and harassment in schools, dropout and discontinuation, limited access to high education and skills)
- Institutional and structural barriers (discrimination in recruitment and workplace, lack of legal awareness and implementation gaps, documentation and identity issues)



BARRIERS TO FORMAL EMPLOYMENT OF TRANSGENDER PERSONS

(These factors restrict entry, continuity and advancement of transgender persons in formal employment.)

- Discrimination in hiring and promotion
- Lack of recognition of qualifications and skills
- Workplace harassment and unsafe environment
- Exclusion from government and formal sector jobs
- Lack of supportive policy and inclusive workplace practices



LIVELIHOOD INFORMALISATION

(Narrowed opportunities lead to engagement in informal, precarious and survival-orientated livelihoods.)

- Informal and low-paid jobs
- Skilled and unskilled labour
- Self-employment (small business, beauty parlour, tailoring, etc.)
- *Badhai* (song and dance performances at special occasions of weddings and childbirth)
- *Mangati* (ritual begging)
- Sex work



ECONOMIC PRECARIETY AND REDUCED SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Economic insecurity (low and unstable income, no job security)
- Reduced social inclusion (restricted access to education and skill development, limited access to healthcare, exclusion from mainstream social and civic life, continued stigma and social distancing)
- Psychosocial impact (stress, anxiety and mental health challenges, low self-esteem and social isolation, violence and vulnerability)



The cycle of exclusion, stigma and informalisation of employment is reinforced

The findings of the study have been represented in Figure 1, which shows that the informalisation of transgender livelihoods is closely linked to multidimensional social exclusion. Educational disadvantage, family rejection, workplace discrimination, and institutional barriers collectively restrict access to formal employment and secure economic opportunities. This supports Silver's understanding of social exclusion as a process through which certain groups are prevented from full participation in social and economic life.

The findings further suggest that informalisation should not be understood simply as an individual occupational choice. Although transgender persons participate in diverse livelihoods, including self-employment, *badhai*, begging, and sex work, qualitative evidence shows that precarious occupations may become necessary where formal employment opportunities are limited. At the same time, community networks and individual agency play an important role in navigating these constraints.

Goffman's Stigma Theory further helps explain the social processes underlying the employment and livelihood disadvantages identified in the findings. Stigma attached to transgender identity can influence how individuals are perceived in educational institutions, workplaces, and wider society, resulting in stereotyping, discrimination, and social distancing. Such processes can restrict access to formal employment and reinforce dependence on occupations that may be socially stigmatised. Thus, economic exclusion is not only a consequence of institutional barriers but is also shaped by the everyday devaluation of transgender identities. Goffman's perspective therefore complements Silver's framework by demonstrating how social stigma can translate into economic exclusion and contribute to the reproduction of livelihood precarity (Figure 1).

Finally, the relationship between livelihood insecurity and social exclusion appears to be mutually reinforcing. Dependence on precarious livelihoods can limit economic security, social protection, dignity, and wider social participation, while existing social exclusion continues to restrict access to secure employment. Thus, transgender livelihood informalisation is best understood as a structurally conditioned but socially negotiated process, requiring interventions that address not only employment discrimination but also the wider educational, social, and institutional inequalities underlying economic exclusion.

Conclusion

This study has examined the informalisation of transgender livelihoods in India through the interconnected dimensions of social exclusion, barriers to formal employment, and economic precarity. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative secondary evidence demonstrates that transgender persons continue to encounter multiple and overlapping disadvantages across education, family, employment, and institutional settings. These disadvantages restrict access to secure formal employment and contribute to greater dependence on informal, precarious, and survival-oriented livelihoods.

Livelihood informalisation cannot be understood simply as an outcome of individual occupational preference. Educational exclusion, family rejection, workplace discrimination, social stigma, and institutional barriers can narrow the range of economic opportunities available to transgender persons. Transgender persons participate mostly in unskilled labour, self-employment, and their traditional occupational jobs of *badhai*, *mangti*, etc. Informal livelihoods may therefore function

both as a response to structural exclusion and as a means through which individuals and communities negotiate constrained economic circumstances.

Economic precarity extends beyond the absence of formal employment. Dependence on insecure livelihoods can affect access to financial resources, social protection, dignity, and broader forms of social participation. Thus, a mutually reinforcing and reciprocal relationship emerges between social exclusion and livelihood insecurity: exclusion can push transgender persons towards precarious livelihoods, while the stigma and insecurity associated with some of these livelihoods can further reinforce their social marginalisation.

Overall, the study argues that legal recognition alone is insufficient to achieve substantive economic inclusion. Meaningful inclusion requires interventions that address the structural conditions producing livelihood informalisation, including educational disadvantage, family and social exclusion, discriminatory employment practices, documentation barriers, limited access to financial services, and inadequate social protection. Policies concerning transgender persons therefore need to move beyond formal recognition towards creating accessible and non-discriminatory pathways to education, skill development, decent employment, entrepreneurship, social security, and financial inclusion. The central challenge is not simply to provide transgender persons with access to employment but to transform the social and institutional conditions that have historically restricted their access to secure and dignified livelihoods.

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