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# Perceptions and Lived Experiences of Transgender Individuals toward the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026 in Delhi NCR: A Pre-Post Focus Group Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

### Purpose

The recognition of transgender rights in India has evolved substantially with the establishment of legal recognition of transgender identities and policies that aim to ensure protection for gender minorities. However, there are still many issues regarding the effectiveness of existing laws in combating social exclusion, health inequalities, discrimination, and lack of representation faced by the transgender community. The recent Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026 has fueled the debate on inclusivity, access to health care, legal recognition, and anti-discrimination legislation in India. Given these circumstances, the current research examines the views of transgender persons concerning the amendment bill in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) through the pre–post focus group discussion method.

### Design/Methodology

The research design for this study was exploratory qualitative research based on an interpretivist philosophy. The respondents were purposefully selected using snowball sampling to ensure the inclusion of different experiences of transgender people in Delhi NCR. The data were obtained using focus group discussions and reflective assessment activities analyzing changes in awareness, perception, and interpretation of the bill.

### Findings

The results showed consistent instances of social marginalization, institutional distrust, unequal access to healthcare services, and inadequate engagement in policy-making processes.

### Implications

The researchers stressed that mere legal acknowledgment is not enough unless there is increased institutional responsibility, accessible healthcare, and transgender involvement in governance and policymaking.



**Keywords:** Transgender Rights; Gender Identity; Policy Perception; Lived Experiences; Focus Group Discussion; Delhi NCR; Legislative Reform



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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Historically, transgender communities have been in a complex sociocultural space in India, a space of ritual visibility and systemic marginalisation. However, identities like hijra, kinnar, and gender diverse communities have been present in South Asian societies for centuries yet colonial legal and postcolonial social structures played a major role in exclusion of the gender-diverse communities from the mainstream political, economic and institutional space (Nair, 2022). Transgender people today experience discrimination and inequality in the healthcare sector, at work, while

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seeking accommodation and even in education, leading to greater social vulnerability and mental health problems ([Arvind et al., 2021](#)).

Gender identity in India is highly shaped by sociocultural context, religion, and ideas about binary genders, including masculine and feminine identities. The power relations associated with these concepts can easily pathologize transgender and non-binary gender identities, promoting stigma and social exclusion ([Giritharan, 2020](#)). Despite increasing public awareness and attention to issues related to LGBTQ+ rights, transgender people have experienced higher rates of discrimination, exclusion, and lack of family support ([Verma et al., 2023](#)).

The case of National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India has been an extremely significant step in terms of transgender rights in India because it established transgender people as a "third gender" and recognized their right to equality and self-recognition. The judgement was crucial for developing the legal framework for transgender rights and called upon the government to implement measures aimed at welfare and prevention of discrimination against transgender people ([Bhattacharya et al., 2022](#)). The following acts of legislation, particularly the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, were introduced to make sure that the rights of the transgender community are protected legally. However, the bill has faced a considerable amount of criticism by activists and scholars, who argue that certain aspects of the bill do not reflect reality and the needs of the transgender community ([Misra & Ferdous, 2017](#)).

Recent concerns about the need for credentials, health services, social inclusion, and participatory policy making regarding transgender welfare and trans legislation have increasingly become part of public discussion in recent years. While there may be little doubt that legal reform can achieve substantive equality only when combined with efforts to tackle structural discrimination and social inequality ([Kaur, 2024](#)), it is equally important to understand that legal reform is necessary to address the gender gap. Therefore, there needs to be an extensive analysis of this topic with respect to the need to analyze perceptions of transgender individuals with regards to legislative change and how their experiences affect their interpretation of policy and their trust in the process of governance. Therefore, there should be an examination of the perspective that transsexuals and transgender individuals have with regards to legislative change and policy interpretations.

### **Contextualizing the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026**

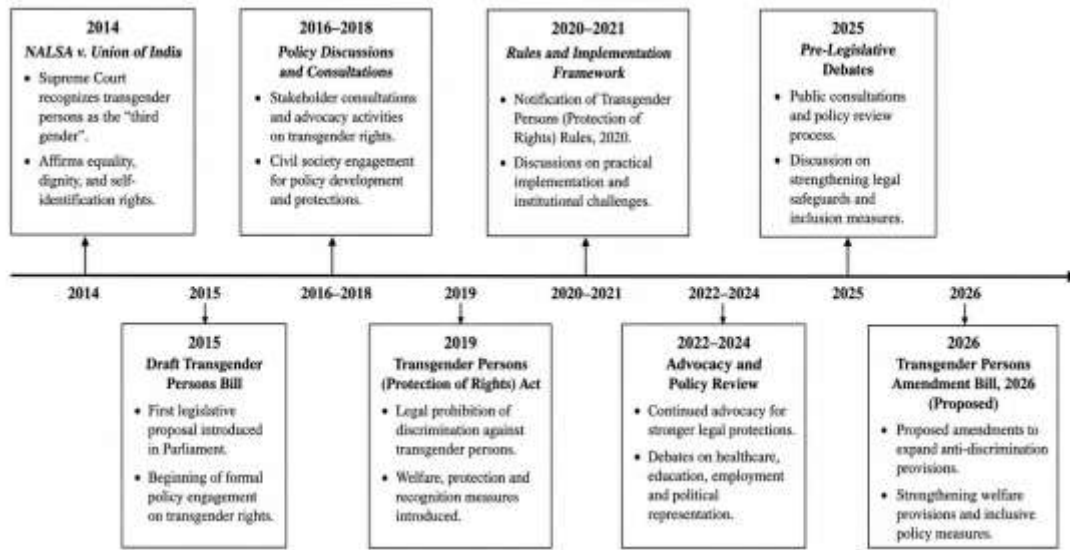
Proposed Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026 is yet another step towards recognizing the issue of gender diversity and transgender rights within the legal system of India. This Amendment Bill focuses on reinforcing the protection of transgenders by extending discrimination provisions, welfare support, healthcare access and revisiting legal recognition processes. Among the measures identified under the proposed amendment are provisions for improving social protection mechanisms, employment provisions and measures for addressing issues related to non-discrimination rights violations.

Despite being considered as progressive steps within the Indian legal system, the proposed Amendment Bill has attracted varied responses from the community members, civil society organizations and policy makers. According to the critics, the amendment bill reflects the increasing commitment of the government towards the issues of equality and inclusion of all genders in India. Furthermore, the empowerment of transgender people in India ([Lingam et al., 2024](#)) by focusing on the improvement of healthcare services and educational opportunities as well as enforcing anti-discrimination regulations can bring about positive outcomes for transgendered people socially, politically and economically.

At the same time, there have been criticisms regarding how the process would run, under whose supervision would it happen, and how much community input is involved in drafting the policy. According to previous research, individuals from the transgender community who are not given any sort of participation in the decision-making process do not have a chance to bring change to the structure by adopting legal reforms ([Bhattacharya et al., 2022](#)). The question has

been raised in regard to the recognition of diverse nature of transgender people and experiences in different socio-economic settings in the Amendment Bill.

Thus, the social and legal implications of the Amendment Bill are tremendous. Besides its legislative implications, it can affect the attitude and behavior of institutions as well as the general discourse on citizenship and social justice in India. It is important to know how the transgender community interprets this legislation and responds to it.



**Figure 1:** Timeline of Major Transgender Rights and Policy Developments in India (2014–2026)

The timeline provided in Figure 1 is an illustration of the major events that contributed to the shaping of transgender legislation and gender inclusivity in India between the years 2014 and 2026. Such events include the judgment issued in National Legal Services Authority vs. Union of India, the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, subsequent policy conflicts, initiatives in advocacy, and ultimately, the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026. These milestones provide valuable information on the changing dynamics of transgender rights regulation in India, which acts as a backdrop for contemporary understanding of the issue.

**Problem Statement**

Even though the transgender population is increasingly recognised and visible in Indian society, there are many forms of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression in different spheres of life that they continue to endure. The experiences of transgender people have not been considered by the authorities during any legal reforms, as these efforts have concentrated on tokenism without addressing the actual experience of the population in the aforementioned spheres of life (Arvind et al., 2021). Therefore, several issues have arisen regarding the effectiveness and social acceptance of changes in policies towards transgender people.

While scholarship has focused on the legal, sociological and policy aspects of transgender rights in recent years, the subject matter of transgender people's own experiences of new legislation, for instance the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026, is underexplored. Existing literature is predominantly institutional analysis and lacks of experiential story telling which results in limited insights into policy discourses and how they relate to identity, trust, exclusion, and social participation (Yanow 2007). In addition, there are still few studies which use comparative pre- and post-discussion frameworks that can account for the impact of collective dialogue and shared experience on the interpretation of policies by transgender people.

Thus, the need is evident for contextually relevant qualitative research which prioritizes the voices of transgender people in the current policy discussions. A study of perceptions and lived reality of transgender people in Delhi NCR can give insights into social implications of legislative reform and can be used as inputs for more inclusive, participatory and evidence-based policy making processes.

### Research Aim

The objective of this study is to explore the perception and lived experience of transgender persons in Delhi-NCR with respect to the Transgender Persons (Amendment) Bill 2026 through the lens of comparative pre-post focus group analysis.

### Research Objectives

**RO 1:** To investigate the first impressions of transgender people about the Amendment Bill.

**RO 2:** To investigate the experiences that affect their understanding of the policy.

**RO 3:** To investigate changes in perception following group discussion.

**RO 4:** To highlight the key social, legal, and psychological issues around the Bill.

**RO 5:** To come up with policy recommendations.

### Research Questions

**RQ 1:** How do transgender people in Delhi NCR view the Amendment Bill 2026?

**RQ 2:** What experiences impact their viewpoints?

**RQ 3:** In what way does discussion in the focus groups affect their perspectives?

**RQ 4:** What main issues and considerations come out in their discussion?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptualizing Gender Identity and Transgender Experiences

Gender identity is a person's identity in relation to gender that may or may not necessarily be aligned with their biological sex. Recent studies bring in the focus of the fact that gender is not merely a biological phenomenon but also a socially and culturally constructed identity ([Nair, 2022](#)). Transgender identity existed in India even during ancient times, as the transgender communities included Hijras, Kinnars, Aravanis, Jogappas ([Dangre & Tripathi, 2018](#)). However, the rigidity of gender identities, which has become the legacy of colonialism and postcolonialism, has excluded transgender persons from the mainstream of society.

Issues surrounding transgender are frequently focused on issues of body politics, citizenship, legitimacy, and social acceptance. Heteronormativity, from a queer perspective, generally de-legitimizes gender variation by asserting the gender dichotomy in the form of gender roles, that is, masculine and feminine. ([Sharma, 2008](#)). Similarly, social myths around gender dysphoria persist and continue to impact social exclusion and cultural fearfulness ([Taslim & Canales, 2023](#)).

Social Identity Theory identifies how belonging to a particular group and categorization impacts identity formation, which causes stigma and discrimination toward transgender persons ([Verma et al., 2023](#)). Intersectionality Theory is another way of understanding how gender identity is further complicated by class, caste, religion, and economics, and how people thereby become vulnerable ([Kaur, 2024](#)). Research evidence exists to demonstrate that the transgender community has faced discrimination in healthcare, educational institutions, workplaces and other social institutions ([Arvind et al., 2021](#)).

## Transgender Rights in India

The legal protection of transgender rights in India has progressed from historical invisibility to increased recognition. While transgender populations have historically been involved in significant cultural and ritual events, colonial laws played an important role in establishing them as criminals and outsiders (Nair, 2022). The legacy of colonialism had also impacted Indian legal and social institutions post-independence, which were discriminatory towards gender minorities (Dangre & Tripathi, 2018).

Transgender people's acknowledgment as a vulnerable population in the constitution was realized through the Supreme Court ruling of National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India. It expressly upheld the rights of transgender people to equality, dignity, and free speech (Bhattacharya et al., 2022). The adoption of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act aimed at ensuring non-discrimination in different areas such as education, healthcare, employment, and housing. However, the act faces criticism for lack of consultation with the community and stringent identity recognition mechanisms (Misra & Ferdous, 2017). Despite the existence of positive laws, transgender individuals in India have faced stigma, discrimination, and marginalization resulting from cultural practices and socio-economic differences (Verma et al., 2023; Kaur, 2024).

## Legislative and Policy Frameworks

There have been increased efforts towards legislations regarding transgender in India, considering the acknowledgment of the variety of genders within the legal and institutional framework of the country. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act can be considered as the most liberal law enacted for transgender in India, with regard to protecting their rights and ensuring their wellbeing. According to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, any kind of discrimination regarding education, health, employment, housing, and public services should be prohibited, and governmental entities must take actions for securing well-being measures for transgender persons (Bhattacharya et al., 2022).

Despite being progressive and liberating, however, scholars and transgender activists have criticized the act in the aspect of conflicting with self-identification under the ruling of National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India. Other arguments have been made on implementation problems and lack of accountability on discrimination.

The Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026 is proposed to make amendments on certain parts of the act, which include protection from discrimination, improving access to health care services, employment security, and institutional accountability. Nevertheless, scholars remain skeptical about its sufficiency in dealing with transgenders' problems in India (Lingam et al., 2024).

The comparative overview highlights the major differences between the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and the proposed Amendment Bill 2026 in areas such as legal recognition, healthcare, employment, and social protection. Table 1 further demonstrates how the proposed amendments aim to strengthen inclusiveness, institutional accountability, and transgender rights protections.

## Lived Experiences of Transgender Individuals

Discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion characterize the lives of transgender individuals in India. Access to gender-affirming care, mental health services, and healthcare in general remains an issue due to discrimination against the population by healthcare facilities (Lingam et al., 2024). The stigma associated with transgender status makes people avoid seeking medical help (Gruskin et al., 2019). Employment discrimination also affects the social life and finances of trans people in India. Many members of this community face barriers in accessing employment and receiving fair treatment at work (Aaberg, 2022). Such circumstances lead to psychological distress among transgender communities (Arvind et al., 2021).

**Table 1.** Comparative Overview of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and the Proposed Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026

<b>Policy Dimension</b>	<b>Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019</b>	<b>Proposed Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026</b>	<b>Major Policy Implications</b>
Legal Recognition of Gender Identity	Requires certification procedures through designated authorities for legal recognition.	Proposes simplified and more self-identification-oriented recognition procedures.	Enhances autonomy, dignity, and reduction of bureaucratic barriers.
Anti-Discrimination Provisions	Prohibits discrimination in education, healthcare, employment, and public services.	Expands anti-discrimination protections with stronger institutional accountability mechanisms.	Improves enforcement capacity and legal protection against systemic discrimination.
Healthcare Access	Provides general commitment toward healthcare access without detailed implementation mechanisms.	Introduces expanded healthcare inclusion measures, mental health support, and gender-affirming care provisions.	Strengthens healthcare accessibility and institutional inclusiveness.
Employment and Economic Inclusion	Encourages non-discrimination in employment but lacks structured inclusion programs.	Proposes targeted employment inclusion initiatives, skill development, and workplace protection measures.	Supports economic empowerment and labor market participation.
Educational Inclusion	Calls for non-discriminatory educational access.	Introduces stronger monitoring frameworks for inclusive educational environments and anti-bullying protections.	Promotes safer and more inclusive educational institutions.
Welfare and Social Protection	Directs governments to formulate welfare schemes for transgender persons.	Expands welfare provisions including housing assistance, social security, and community support initiatives.	Enhances social protection and reduces vulnerability.
Participation in Policymaking	Limited formal mechanisms for direct transgender community consultation.	Proposes increased stakeholder participation and consultative policy engagement frameworks.	Encourages participatory governance and policy legitimacy.
Institutional Accountability	Limited enforcement and grievance redressal mechanisms.	Strengthens accountability structures, complaint procedures, and monitoring systems.	Improves transparency and implementation effectiveness.
Protection Against Violence and Abuse	Provides general protections but limited implementation specificity.	Proposes enhanced protections against violence, harassment, and institutional abuse.	Addresses safety concerns and human rights protections.
Mental Health and Psychosocial Support	Minimal explicit focus on psychosocial wellbeing.	Includes provisions for mental health counseling, rehabilitation, and psychosocial support services.	Recognizes mental health as a critical component of transgender welfare.

**Source:** Compiled by the author based on legislative analysis, policy debates, and existing transgender rights literature including [Bhattacharya et al. \(2022\)](#), [Misra and Ferdous \(2017\)](#), [Lingam et al. \(2024\)](#), and [Kaur \(2024\)](#).

Education is another sphere where transgender individuals face exclusion and discrimination. Being bullied and ignored by institutions is common among students who identify as trans ([Kaur, 2024](#)). Furthermore, housing discrimination, along with family rejection, results in the precariousness of housing conditions for trans people. The presence of laws protecting transgender rights does not solve the problem of violence, stigma, and harassment, resulting in anxiety and depression ([Bhattacharya et al., 2022](#); [Verma et al., 2023](#)).

### **Policy Perception and Public Participation**

Policy perception may be defined as individual interpretations and emotional evaluations of public policies and institutional decisions. As stated by [Yanow \(2007\)](#), people perceive policy legitimacy in terms of not only the content but also participation, representation, and trust in governance structures. Policies concerning marginalized groups elicit diverse reactions based on the degree to which communities feel represented within decision-making mechanisms.

In participatory governance models, affected communities are actively engaged in policy formulation and implementation. Community involvement is crucial to increase the legitimacy of policy, ensure greater accountability, and improve the process of policy implementation by incorporating the experience of community members in governance ([Whitzman et al., 2014](#)). In particular, in relation to transgender rights advocacy, community participation is important since trans people have experienced firsthand discriminatory treatment and exclusion from institutions.

Additionally, legal changes alone cannot ensure inclusion without social acceptance and institutional engagement ([Misra & Ferdous, 2017](#)). Participating in the discussion around legislation can help promote collective empowerment and increase political visibility and inclusiveness of governance processes ([Wijesiriwardena et al., 2020](#)). Thus, focus group discussions can be useful in exploring how collective interactions affect policy perception, attitudes, and the sense of justice and inclusion ([Raman, 2025](#)).

### **Empirical Studies on Transgender Policy Perceptions**

International literature on perceptions of transgender policies emphasizes the connection between legal recognition, institutional inclusion, and social reality. International research indicates that while legal reform might positively impact symbolic recognition, it is incapable of addressing structural discrimination and exclusion ([Hussain et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, transgender people's perception of policy effectiveness relies significantly on implementation, accessibility, and institutional responsiveness.

Transgender issues have received attention in India through qualitative research focused on identity issues, mental health, healthcare discrimination, and social exclusion ([Arvind et al., 2021](#); [Verma et al., 2023](#)). Literature on LGBTQ+ rights confirms that formal legal changes cannot address deeply embedded social biases and institutional inequalities ([Kaur, 2024](#)). Concerns about inadequate transgender representation during legislative discussion were identified by [Bhattacharya et al. \(2022\)](#), leading many to believe that policy frameworks inadequately represent transgender interests.

Although there is a significant body of research, many research gaps remain. For instance, few studies have analyzed transgender views on proposed legislative reform using a comparative pre- and post-policy discussion design. Little research has focused on the influence of collective discussion on transgender policy perception and community interpretation of such discussions in India.

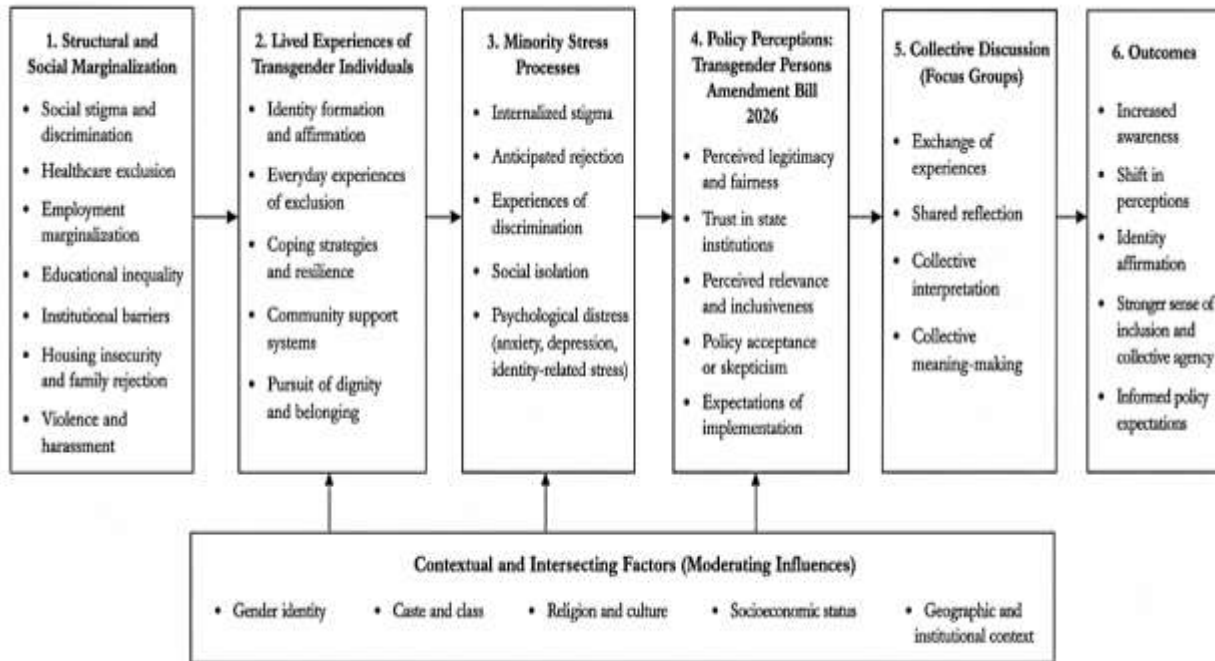
### **Theoretical Framework**

In this research, a combined theoretical framework of Intersectionality Theory along with Minority Stress Theory will be used to understand how structural inequalities, stigma, and lived experiences affect the perception of legislative reforms of transgender persons. According to the Intersectionality Theory, discrimination takes place through multiple layers of power structures such as gender identity, class, caste, religion, and socio-economic status ([Kaur, 2024](#)). In

other words, the application of this theory is useful in exploring how exclusion from multiple dimensions influences transgender people.

In addition, the concept of Minority Stress Theory sheds light on how exposure to constant stigmatization, prejudice, and social rejection causes psychological stress in vulnerable groups of people. [Arvind et al. \(2021\)](#) found that transgender people often suffer from social stress and emotional anxiety due to structural discrimination.

Combining both theories in one research model creates a holistic approach to studying lived experiences and structural discrimination in relation to the perception of the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026.



**Figure 2:** Conceptual Framework Linking Policy Perception, Lived Experience, and Social Marginalization

The framework explains the relationship between structural inequality, minority stress, lived experiences, and the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026 in shaping transgender individuals’ perspectives. Figure 2 further illustrates these theoretical linkages within the study context. This theoretical model captures the intersectionality of social determinants that may have an impact on the understanding of policy, trust in governance, and the perception of legislation. Furthermore, the theoretical model highlights the importance of focus group discussions in building collective awareness and participation in transgender policy dialogue.

**Source:** Source: Developed by the author based on Intersectionality Theory and Minority Stress Theory adapted from [Kaur \(2024\)](#), [Arvind et al. \(2021\)](#), [Yanow \(2007\)](#), and [Misra and Ferdous \(2017\)](#).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Philosophy

This research relies on the interpretivist research paradigm as the framework within which researchers aim at understanding social realities based on the participants' subjective meanings, experiences, and interpretations. This research paradigm is ideal in cases when the researcher explores marginalized groups because this research approach considers the participant's feelings and experiences more importantly than just the objectivity of the measurement (Yanow, 2007). In the realm of transgender policy research, the approach allows exploring how the transgender individuals understand the changes brought about by legislative reforms.

Under the interpretive research paradigm, social realities are constructed through culture, identity, interactions, and people's experiences. In the case of perception of the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026, people's experiences are impacted greatly by issues such as the process of self-recognition, gender dysphoria, discrimination, and institutionalized oppression, hence making it necessary to rely on qualitative data rather than quantitative. Thus, the paradigm is consistent with the research aim to explore the connection between participants' lived experiences and policy perceptions.

The approach is consistent with the participatory and community-centered research approaches that are used in gender studies.

### Research Design

The study utilizes a qualitative exploratory research design to explore the views and experiences of transgender persons in relation to the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026. It is suitable to conduct qualitative exploratory research on issues where little empirical evidence exists in order to understand participants' perspectives and interpret their feelings and views (Yanow, 2007).

The researcher uses a comparative pre- and post-focus group design to evaluate the impact of group interaction on participants' views and emotions in relation to the amendment bill. In the pre-focus group phase, the researcher identifies participants' views and expectations on the amendment bill. After the policy discussions and analysis sessions, post-focus groups are held to evaluate the change in awareness, views, and evaluations of the bill.

Focus group research is particularly useful in transgender studies as it facilitates collective participation and sharing of experiences and views in a friendly environment. Participants can express their emotions regarding institutionalized discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization in society. Focus group interactions also enable the emergence of shared meanings and collective views.

### Study Area

The study will be carried out in the region of Delhi NCR, which is one of the largest metropolitan areas in India. Delhi NCR consists of Delhi and urban areas of surrounding districts of neighboring states. This region exhibits high sociocultural diversity and fast urbanization rate along with civil engagement. There are numerous transgender advocacy groups, healthcare organizations, educational institutions, and other entities that contribute to the discussion around transgender rights in India.

Delhi NCR constitutes an appropriate sociopolitical environment for analyzing the perception of transgender policy since it encompasses both awareness regarding laws and progressive legislation on LGBTQ+ rights on the one hand and inequality and discrimination of transgenders within society on the other hand. Although there has been progress in raising awareness about issues faced by transgender people, many of them still suffer from discrimination in terms of housing, employment, healthcare, and even participation in public activities in urbanized India (Kaur, 2024).

Additionally, the high political importance of Delhi NCR adds more value to conducting the study within this area. Being the main city of India, Delhi NCR acts as the center for all legislative and public discussion regarding transgender issues in India.

## Population and Sampling

### *Target Population*

For this research, the target population comprises transgender persons aged 18 years and above living in Delhi NCR. The research targets individuals who identify as transgender, Hijra, Kinnar, non-binary, gender non-conforming, or belong to any other gender minority community. The selection of participants will be done on the basis of participants' knowledge about social experiences of transgender persons and their capacity to contribute insightful information on the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026.

**Table 2.** Participant Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n = 32)	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18–24 years	8	25.0
	25–34 years	14	43.8
	35–44 years	7	21.9
	45 years and above	3	9.3
Gender Identity	Transgender Women	15	46.9
	Transgender Men	6	18.8
	Hijra/Kinnar	8	25.0
	Non-binary/Gender Non-conforming	3	9.3
Educational Qualification	Primary Education	5	15.6
	Secondary Education	10	31.3
	Undergraduate Level	12	37.5
	Postgraduate Level	5	15.6
Employment Status	Unemployed	9	28.1
	Informal Employment	11	34.4
	Formal Employment	7	21.9
	Self-Employed	5	15.6
Residential Area within Delhi NCR	Delhi	14	43.8
	Noida	6	18.8
	Gurugram	7	21.9
	Ghaziabad/Faridabad	5	15.6
Awareness of Amendment Bill 2026	High Awareness	9	28.1
	Moderate Awareness	13	40.6
	Limited Awareness	10	31.3

**Source:** Field Survey Data Generated through Pre- and Post-Focus Group Discussions Conducted in Delhi NCR, 2026.

### *Eligibility Criteria*

In order to qualify as research participants, individuals must meet the following criteria:

*be above 18 years of age;*

*self-identify as transgender or gender diverse;*

*live in Delhi NCR;  
demonstrate readiness to engage in discussions; and  
sign an informed consent form.*

The research will involve the application of purposive and snowball sampling methods. Purposive sampling involves selection of individuals with relevant experience and knowledge in transgender-related policies and social interactions. Moreover, snowball sampling technique will be instrumental in recruiting research participants through referrals, particularly when it comes to interviewing members of vulnerable communities, such as transgender people ([Arvind et al., 2021](#)).

This allows for better accessibility to various perspectives from transgender people from different social economic backgrounds, education, and professions while building trust in the communities.

The participant demographic profile reflects diversity in age, gender identity, education, employment status, and residential location within Delhi NCR. Table 2 further highlights that most participants belonged to the 25–34 age group and reported moderate awareness of the Amendment Bill 2026.

### **Sample Size**

A sample size of up to 25 to 40 transgender individuals is proposed for this study with regard to distribution within four to six focus groups. It is appropriate to use such a sample size for qualitative exploratory research since the sample size allows in-depth discussion and analysis to be conducted simultaneously.

For effective interactions, discussion, and exchange of ideas, each focus group discussion will contain six to eight participants who can actively participate during the process. In addition, smaller groups facilitate the creation of an environment whereby people can feel comfortable enough to discuss their experiences regarding discrimination, exclusion, and institutional treatment.

Data saturation will be achieved once thematic saturation is attained in which case new discussions bring no new data.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### ***Pre-Focus Group Stage***

The first phase of data gathering is through preliminary perception assessment via brief reflective questions and introductions. The respondents will be probed about their knowledge about the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026, as well as their thoughts on how to go about legislating such an amendment, considering their background.

#### ***Focus Group Discussions***

In the second phase, the focus group discussion is conducted under moderated conditions in safe, non-threatening, and non-discriminatory community settings. The topics include health care access, discrimination, policy legitimacy, social inclusion, employment, institutional trust, and efficacy of the policy. The moderators ensure equal participation by all stakeholders in the discussion process, providing an emotionally sensitive environment.

During the policy discussion, policy awareness sessions are integrated to make participants familiar with relevant sections of the Amendment Bill.

#### ***Focus Group Stage***

The last phase entails a re-evaluation of the participants' perception based on the discussions within the group. The participants will be asked to reflect on whether the group discussion changed their perception in terms of how they perceived the issue emotionally and intellectually, as well as whether it affected their expectations of the legislation.

## Research Instruments

The process of data collection involves the use of several qualitative research tools that are meant to generate participants' experiences, views, and insights.

Semi-structured focus group discussion guides will be used, whereby a series of open-ended questions about transgender rights, social exclusion, healthcare provision, institutional discrimination, and policies will be asked from the participants. The process of semi-structured interviewing allows room for the participants to talk freely and yet at the same time maintain consistency in all discussions.

Besides, observation notes on how participants behave, react, and respond to certain questions will be recorded for interpretation during analysis. Participants will be required to fill reflective response sheets that contain questions aimed at eliciting the views of the participants regarding transgender policies and issues discussed during the focus group discussions.

## Data Analysis Technique

The research makes use of thematic analysis in studying patterns, meanings, and recurring stories that can be found among the participants' conversations. Thematic analysis is well-suited for qualitative exploratory research because it allows researchers to systematically interpret the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of participants (Yanow, 2007).

Thematic analysis will be done using the six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke, namely:

*Familiarization with data;*

*Generation of initial codes;*

*Identification of themes;*

*Review of themes;*

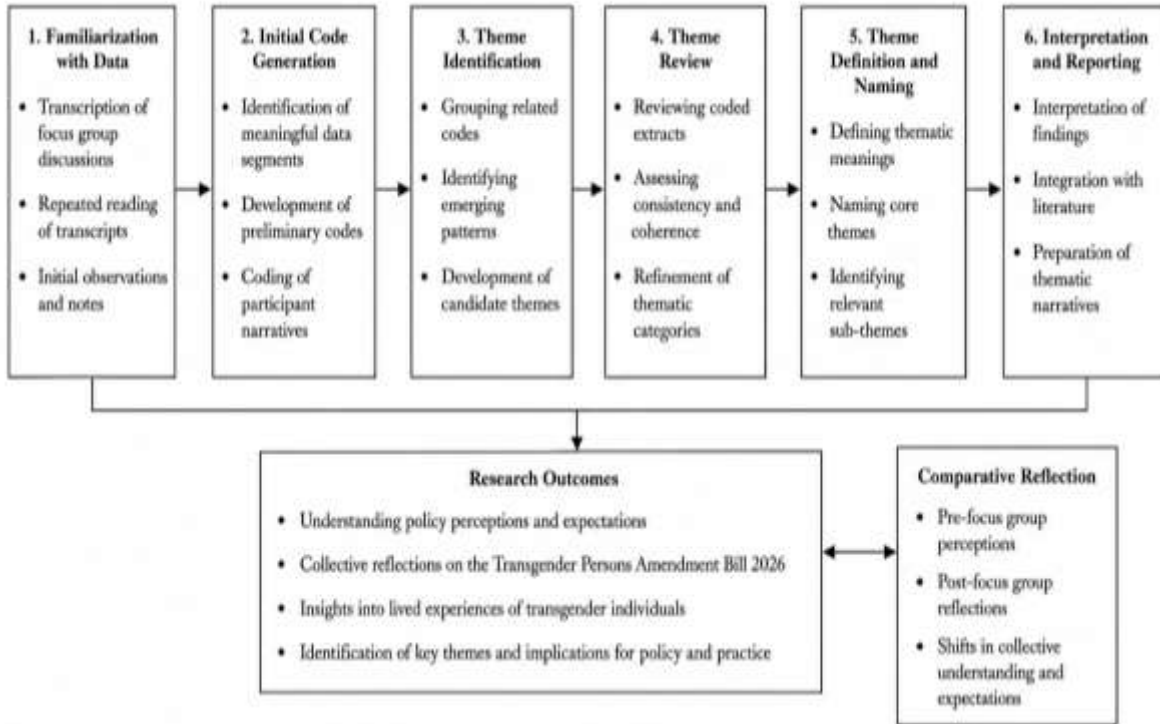
*Definition and naming of themes; and*

*Presentation of findings.*

Recordings of audio-discussions are first transcribed before coding and analysis. Comparisons of responses from before and after focus groups are made to see changes in awareness, attitudes, emotions, and interpretation of the policy. The comparative approach helps the research understand how group discussion affects the participants' perception of the Amendment Bill and issues of social inclusion and governance.

Categories are likely to involve discrimination, institutional trust, inequality in healthcare provision, identity recognition, legitimacy of policies, social inclusion, and participatory governance.

The following gender identities were found in the sample respondents: transgender women, transgender men, Hijra/Kinnar, and non-binary respondents. The heterogeneity of gender identities in the study added to the richness of the analysis because different perspectives on social exclusion, policy, and institutions could be examined.



**Figure 3:** *Thematic Analysis Process Flowchart*

**Source:** Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis framework and modified by the author for this study.

**Ethical Considerations**

Considering the sensitivity surrounding the experiences of transgenders and identity issues in general, the study will ensure that high ethical standards are followed throughout the entire process of research. This includes provision of informed consent documents to participants to familiarize them with the purpose of the study, procedure for participation in the study, confidentiality of their identities, and right to withdraw at any point of time in the study.

Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity in the study will involve use of pseudonyms in the analysis of the interview transcripts and results of the research while removing any personal information in them. This will also involve securing all audio tapes and research papers containing participants’ identities. Furthermore, the researcher will adopt practices for conducting interviews in an emotionally supportive environment when discussing issues related to discrimination, stigma, violence, and social exclusion.

**Trustworthiness and Rigor**

In order to achieve methodological rigour and reliability, the research will utilize qualitative evaluation standards such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. The criteria for credibility will be achieved through prolonged involvement with participants, reflection, and triangulation of data from interviews, observations, and reflective response sheets. For dependability, thorough documentation of research methods, coding, and analysis will be undertaken.

Confirmability will be ensured through reflexive interpretation and systematic analysis in order to eliminate researcher bias. The use of exact quotations of participants’ responses will assist in achieving interpretive validity. For transferability, a detailed description of the research setting, participants, and methodology will be included to allow

readers to assess the applicability of the results to other research situations pertaining to transgender rights, policy perception, and social inclusion studies.

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS

### Participant Profile Analysis

The sample of this study comprised 32 transgender individuals in Delhi NCR that represented various ages, educational backgrounds, employment situations, and genders. The majority of the participants in the study were aged between 25 and 34 years, which suggests the active participation of younger adults in debates on transgender rights and activism. Fewer participants fell into other age ranges, illustrating their differential knowledge regarding the policies and social inclusion practices.

Participants' educational background was very diverse. Although some of the participants reported a university and post-graduate degree, others faced educational exclusion as a result of bullying and discrimination, being rejected by their families, or experiencing financial difficulties. This is in accordance with past studies that identified educational exclusion as one of the main problems in Indian transgenders ([Kaur, 2024](#); [Tikoo, 1997](#)).

Labor exclusivity and economic vulnerability were found to be prevalent among participants. Many of them were engaged in informal sector employment owing to discrimination at work. Such exclusion from the workforce and poor economic situation have also been found in other research focused on marginalized gender and sexual minorities in India ([Aaberg, 2022](#); [Sumalatha et al., 2021](#)).

The following gender identities were found in the sample respondents: transgender women, transgender men, Hijra/Kinnar, and non-binary respondents. The heterogeneity of gender identities in the study added to the richness of the analysis because different perspectives on social exclusion, policy, and institutions could be examined.

**Table 3:** Socio-Demographic Distribution of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n = 32)	Percentage (%)
Age Distribution	18–24 years	8	25.0
	25–34 years	14	43.8
	35–44 years	7	21.9
	45 years and above	3	9.3
Educational Background	Primary Education	5	15.6
	Secondary Education	10	31.3
	Undergraduate Degree	12	37.5
	Postgraduate Degree	5	15.6
Employment Status	Unemployed	9	28.1
	Informal Employment	11	34.4
	Formal Employment	7	21.9
	Self-Employed	5	15.6
Gender Identity Categories	Transgender Women	15	46.9
	Transgender Men	6	18.8
	Hijra/Kinnar	8	25.0
	Non-binary/Gender Non-conforming	3	9.3
Residential Location within Delhi NCR	Delhi	14	43.8
	Noida	6	18.8
	Gurugram	7	21.9
	Ghaziabad/Faridabad	5	15.6

**Source:** Field Survey and Focus Group Data Collected from Transgender Participants in Delhi NCR, 2026.

The socio-demographic profile of participants reflects diversity in age, education, employment status, gender identity, and residential location within Delhi NCR. Table 3 further highlights that most participants belonged to the 25–34 age group and identified as transgender women.

### **Pre-Focus Group Perceptions**

#### ***Pre-Focus Group Stage Findings***

One of the major themes identified in the pre-focus group phase was distrust in policy implementation. There were several concerns raised by the participants about the impact of the legal reform on institutional changes, which they attributed to their own experiences of being subjected to discrimination in spite of being legally protected by policies. In particular, there was a feeling that such policy interventions can be largely symbolic due to poor implementation.

Another major theme identified in the focus group discussion was fear of symbolic inclusion through legislation. The participants seemed to express doubts about whether legal changes in this area would contribute to more than just symbolism, in particular, improving health care access, work opportunities, and protection from violence. These concerns echo the findings of scholarship, according to which legal recognition does not always ensure substantive equality or social inclusion ([Misra & Ferdous, 2017](#)).

A third major theme in this regard was related to legal recognition procedures. The participants were concerned about whether the Amendment Bill recognized self-identification as in the case of the National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India case.

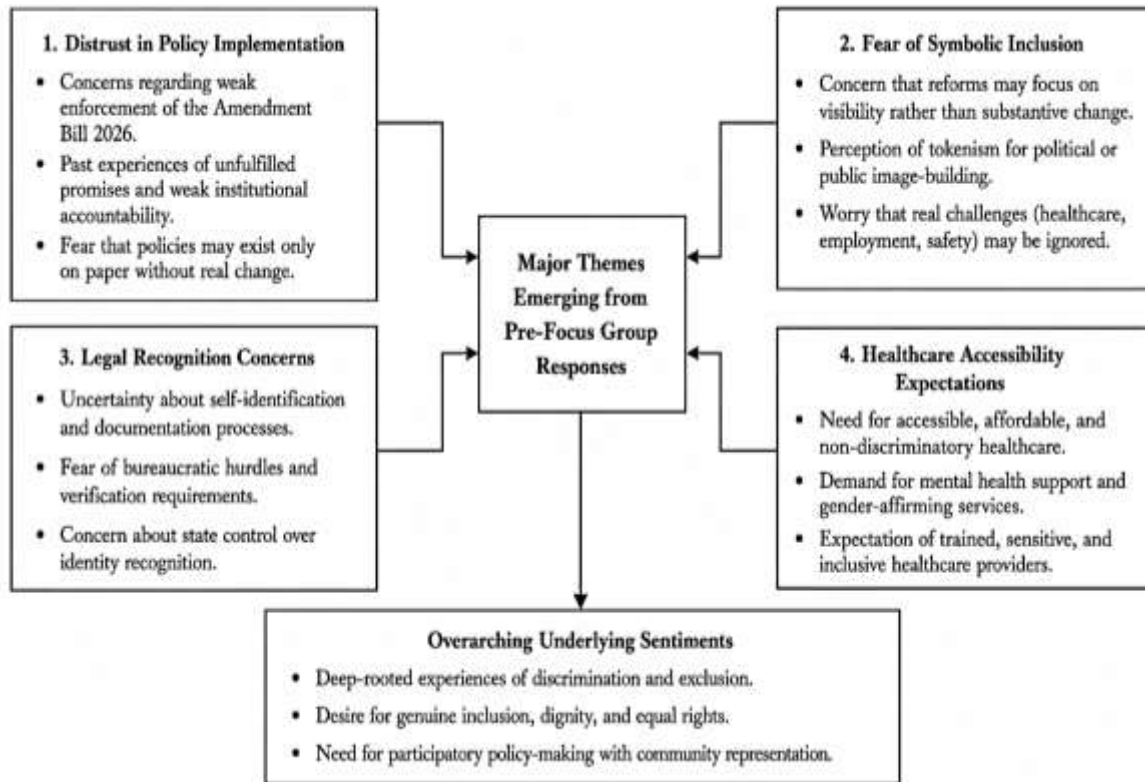
Access to healthcare needs was also an expectation that influenced their early perception. Most participants highlighted the importance of access to mental health care, gender-affirming health care, and discrimination-free medical care. The already existing discrimination in the health sector led to a general lack of confidence on the success of the proposed changes ([Lingam et al., 2024](#); [Gruskin et al., 2019](#)).

The pre-focus group findings highlight concerns related to discrimination, legal recognition, healthcare access, and social inclusion regarding the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026. Figure 4 further presents the major issues raised by respondents. In this respect, the figure captures some of the most salient issues raised by transgender respondents from the area of Delhi NCR, which include mistrust in the implementation of policies, symbolic inclusion, issues of legal processes, as well as expectations on access to healthcare ([Bagga et al., 2025](#)).

### **Lived Experiences Shaping Perceptions**

The perceptions of participants towards the Amendment Bill were informed by personal experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and social vulnerability. Stories of institutional discrimination occurred in healthcare, education, employment, housing, and public spaces. Some participants reported incidences of harassment, denial of services, and disrespect at hospitals and government institutions. Institutional discrimination is a common finding in studies on health inequalities among genders and sexual minorities in India ([Prabhakaran et al., 2018](#); [Mishra et al., 2016](#)).

Family rejection was another recurring theme that affected participants' emotions towards policies for reform. Many participants reported family disapproval, social isolation, and expulsion from their families after revealing their gender identity. Such experiences usually resulted in economic vulnerability, housing instability, and emotional trauma. This theme is evident in studies investigating the emotional and existential experiences of Hijra and transgender persons in India ([Verma et al., 2023](#)).



**Figure 4:** Major Themes Emerging from Pre-Focus Group Responses

**Source:** Developed by the author based on thematic analysis of pre-focus group discussions conducted among transgender participants in Delhi NCR, 2026.

Workplace exclusion greatly affected participants' perceptions about institutional legitimacy. Some respondents stated that even with academic qualifications and job skills, discrimination in workplaces led to unstable employment options. Therefore, participants associated effective policies with economic inclusion and not only legal recognition (Aaberg, 2022).

Public stigma and social surveillance were also part of everyday experiences. Fear of being harassed in public transportation, hospitals, educational settings, and workplaces was a common theme among participants. These results are consistent with other research that considers gender safety, public exclusion, and vulnerability in the context of South Asia (Tripathi et al., 2017; Viswanath & Basu, 2015).

A mental health burden was another important theme across participants' experiences. Anxiety, depression, emotional fatigue, and stress about their identities often followed from the experience of discrimination and exclusion among participants. Similarly, previous research suggests that minority stress and exclusion are closely connected to the psychological distress of trans people (Arvind et al., 2021; Taslim & Canales, 2023).

The representative participant responses highlight major concerns related to discrimination, social exclusion, healthcare accessibility, legal recognition, and mental health challenges within the transgender community. Table 4 further demonstrates how participants emphasized the importance of inclusive policies, community participation, and collective empowerment in achieving meaningful social inclusion.

### Post-Focus Group Perception Changes

Post focus group reflections showed that participants' awareness, understanding of the policy and collective understanding of the Amendment Bill had changed, to a certain degree. There was a high number of participants who reported to have been more aware of policies after the group discussions and explanation of policies. Collaborative dialogue helped participants better grasp particular provisions of the proposed legislation, challenges for implementation and responsibilities for institutions.

**Table 4:** Representative Participant Quotes and Associated Themes

Major Theme	Representative Participant Quote	Interpretive Meaning
Discrimination in Public Institutions	“Even when laws exist, hospital staff still treat us differently and make us feel unwelcome.” – Participant 7	Reflects continued institutional discrimination despite legal protections.
Family Rejection and Social Isolation	“My family stopped supporting me after I openly expressed my gender identity.” – Participant 12	Demonstrates the emotional and economic consequences of family rejection.
Employment Exclusion	“Most employers reject us before even considering our qualifications or skills.” – Participant 19	Highlights workplace discrimination and barriers to economic inclusion.
Fear of Symbolic Inclusion	“The government talks about inclusion, but our everyday lives remain unchanged.” – Participant 4	Indicates skepticism toward the practical impact of legislative reforms.
Healthcare Accessibility Concerns	“Finding respectful healthcare services is still one of our biggest struggles.” – Participant 15	Emphasizes the need for inclusive and gender-sensitive healthcare systems.
Legal Recognition Anxiety	“The documentation process makes it feel like the state controls our identity.” – Participant 21	Reflects concerns regarding identity certification and bureaucratic regulation.
Public Stigma and Harassment	“People stare at us in public spaces as if we do not belong in society.” – Participant 9	Illustrates the persistence of stigma and social exclusion in everyday life.
Mental Health Burden	“Constant rejection and fear affect our mental health more than people realize.” – Participant 27	Highlights the psychological effects of discrimination and social marginalization.
Collective Empowerment Through Discussion	“Hearing others share similar experiences made me feel less isolated.” – Participant 30	Demonstrates the role of collective dialogue in identity affirmation and solidarity.
Demand for Participatory Governance	“Policies about us should not be created without involving our community.” – Participant 5	Reinforces the importance of community participation in policymaking processes.

**Source:** Field Data from Pre- and Post-Focus Group Discussions Conducted among Transgender Participants in Delhi NCR, 2026.

The focus group process also revealed collective identity reinforcement as an important result. Discussion of discrimination, exclusion, and resilience, shared by all, helped to foster greater sense of solidarity and community affirmation among participants. Others mentioned that discussing similar experiences with one another helped to alleviate the sense of isolation and build confidence in advocacy and political engagement among them as a group.

The conversations also yielded a combination of hope and doubt. Some were cautiously hopeful about greater healthcare protections, greater employment inclusion and greater anti-discrimination protections as a result of the Amendment Bill. Others were skeptical, however, because they had had negative experiences with the policies failing, institutions neglecting, and the practices of implementation not being consistent. A similar dynamic between hope and mistrust can be seen in larger research and policy reform studies of marginalized communities ([Hussain et al., 2022](#)).

There was also a significant difference between pre focus group and post focus group responses in the area of policy understanding. At first, the Amendment Bill was perceived by many of the participants mainly in the context of legal recognition. After the group discussion, there was a growing link between policy reform and more general concepts of social inclusion, participatory governance, institutional accountability and community representation. This change points to the need for collaborative discussion to guide interpretation and critical engagement of policy.

Theme	Before Focus Group Discussions (Pre-FGD Perceptions)	After Focus Group Discussions (Post-FGD Perceptions)	Direction of Shift
<b>1. Policy Awareness and Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited awareness of the Amendment Bill 2026.</li> <li>Uncertainty about specific provisions and their implications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased understanding of key provisions and their potential impact.</li> <li>Greater clarity about rights and entitlements.</li> </ul>	Increased awareness
<b>2. Trust in Policy Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low trust in government and institutions.</li> <li>Fear that reforms will not be implemented effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Still cautious, but slightly more hopeful about possible implementation.</li> <li>Emphasis on need for accountability and monitoring.</li> </ul>	Moderate improvement
<b>3. Perception of Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of symbolic or tokenistic inclusion.</li> <li>Belief that visibility may not lead to real change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More recognition of the importance of meaningful inclusion.</li> <li>Stronger demand for substantive and structural changes.</li> </ul>	Stronger demand for substantive inclusion
<b>4. Expectations from Healthcare Provisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High unmet expectations.</li> <li>Doubts about availability of gender-affirming and mental health services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better understanding of proposed healthcare safeguards.</li> <li>Continued demand for accessible and sensitive healthcare services.</li> </ul>	Moderate improvement
<b>5. Understanding of Participatory Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited emphasis on community participation.</li> <li>Unaware of mechanisms for consultation and representation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger support for community involvement in policymaking.</li> <li>Recognition of the need for transgender representation in decision-making.</li> </ul>	Significant improvement

**Overall Shift**  
 Participants demonstrated movement from limited awareness, distrust, and fear of symbolic inclusion toward increased understanding, collective reflection, and stronger demand for meaningful implementation, accountability, and participatory governance.

**Figure 5: Comparative Shift in Perceptions Before and After Focus Group Discussions**

The comparative analysis highlights changes in participants’ perceptions of the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026 before and after the focus group discussions. Figure 5 further demonstrates the shift from skepticism and limited awareness toward greater policy understanding, participatory engagement, and cautious optimism. The figure highlights shifts in policy awareness, institutional trust, perceptions of inclusion, healthcare expectations, and understanding of participatory governance among transgender participants in Delhi NCR. The comparative analysis

demonstrates how collective dialogue and shared lived experiences influenced participants' interpretations of legislative reform, resulting in increased awareness, stronger community identity, and more critical engagement with issues of implementation and social inclusion.

**Source:** Developed by the author based on comparative thematic analysis of pre- and post-focus group responses collected from transgender participants in Delhi NCR, 2026.

### Comparative Thematic Analysis

The comparative thematic analysis showed that while some issues were consistent, other issues arose from post-focus group discussion reflections. The distrust of institutionally oriented measures was a common theme in the research, particularly in relation to the efficiency of the process, its accountability, and discrimination against certain individuals and groups. All respondents stressed that any change would not mean anything without institutional restructuring.

On the other hand, some changes were noticed during reflective interviews about what participants learned during their discussions. First, all respondents knew better about particular policies and were aware of the need to engage in collective action and governance to address the issue at hand. Thematic comparisons show that people switched from focusing on the personal level to viewing the problem more structurally.

The areas of agreement included healthcare access, anti-discrimination laws, secure environment at educational institutions, and community participation in decision-making processes. Transgender individuals should be actively engaged in the process of legislation.

However, there were still some discrepancies about whether the Amendment Bill would be effective enough. Although some stakeholders saw the reformative changes as a good step towards inclusivity, others found the reforms inadequate because of existing social inequalities and stigma attached to being a transgender. The varying perceptions about the transgender issue indicate that it is important to consider the perceptions of transgender policy at both the collective and individual levels.

**Table 5.** Comparative Pre and Post-Focus Group Thematic Matrix

Major Theme	Pre-Focus Group Perceptions	Post-Focus Group Perceptions	Observed Shift
Policy Awareness	Limited understanding of the Amendment Bill and uncertainty regarding policy provisions.	Increased awareness of legal provisions, rights, and institutional responsibilities.	Significant increase in policy understanding and critical engagement.
Trust in Policy Implementation	Strong distrust toward government institutions and implementation mechanisms.	Slightly improved confidence, though concerns regarding accountability remained.	Moderate shift from complete distrust to cautious optimism.
Perception of Inclusion	Fear that reforms would remain symbolic without practical impact.	Greater emphasis on meaningful and participatory inclusion.	Increased demand for substantive rather than symbolic inclusion.
Legal Recognition Concerns	Anxiety regarding identity certification and bureaucratic procedures.	Better understanding of legal processes but continued concern over state regulation of identity.	Limited change; concerns regarding self-identification persisted.
Healthcare Accessibility	Doubts regarding access to gender-affirming and mental health services.	Improved awareness of healthcare-related policy provisions and rights.	Moderate increase in healthcare policy awareness.
Employment and Economic Inclusion	Perception of continued workplace discrimination and economic exclusion.	Stronger advocacy for institutional accountability and inclusive employment policies.	Shift toward collective economic rights discourse.

Community Participation in Governance	Limited awareness of participatory policymaking mechanisms.	Increased support for transgender representation in legislative and institutional processes.	Significant growth in participatory governance awareness.
Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing	High levels of anxiety, social isolation, and emotional distress.	Greater sense of solidarity, validation, and collective identity affirmation.	Positive emotional reinforcement through group interaction.
Social Inclusion and Public Acceptance	Persistent concerns regarding stigma and public discrimination.	Recognition that legal reform must be accompanied by broader cultural change.	Expanded understanding of structural social exclusion.
Overall Perception of the Amendment Bill	Predominantly skeptical and distrustful attitudes toward reform effectiveness.	More nuanced perspectives combining cautious optimism with continued critical awareness.	Transition from generalized skepticism to informed critical evaluation.

*Source: Comparative Thematic Analysis of Pre- and Post-Focus Group Discussions Conducted among Transgender Participants in Delhi NCR, 2026.*

The comparative thematic analysis highlights changes in participants' perceptions before and after the focus group discussions regarding the Amendment Bill and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Table 5 further demonstrates increased policy awareness, participatory engagement, and collective advocacy, while concerns related to identity regulation, discrimination, and implementation challenges continued to persist

## DISCUSSION

### Interpretation of Key Findings

From the results, it becomes evident that there is a direct connection between lived experiences and the trust of transgender individuals toward the legislative reform on transgender matters. The perceptions that the participants held about the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026 were shaped not only by the proposed legislation but also by their lived experiences of discrimination and exclusion from institutions. Individuals who had undergone healthcare discrimination, workplace exclusion, family abandonment, and public ostracization often found it difficult to believe in the success of the legislative reform.

In addition, the research found that social exclusion has an important impact on legislative perception. The participants interpreted the amendment bill with the experiences of marginalization associated with healthcare access, identity, and employment. In accordance with [Misra & Ferdous \(2017\)](#), this shows that legal recognition does not guarantee social equality.

As a result of the focus groups, post-session interviews revealed improved policy awareness, enhanced community solidarity, and increased interest in the idea of participatory governance. Group discussion was crucial for raising political awareness, identity formation, and criticism of social inclusion policies for transgender individuals in India.

### Theoretical Interpretation

The results have validated the significance of Intersectionality Theory in the analysis of policy perceptions about transgenderism in India. The experiences shared by participants indicated that transgender experiences involved the intersection of gender identity with economic marginalization, lack of formal education, unemployment, insecurity, homelessness, and social stigma, giving rise to varied types of exclusion. These experiences of marginalization were further emphasized by many participants, highlighting [Kaur's \(2024\)](#) point about the interlinked systems of inequalities that define transgender experiences.

Furthermore, the results have underscored the importance of Minority Stress Theory. Exposure to discrimination, public stigma, family rejection, and institutional exclusion led to emotional distress, anxiety, and exhaustion in the form of mental and physical fatigue in participants. Studies have observed similar impacts of persistent discrimination on transgender individuals across several studies in India ([Arvind et al., 2021](#); [Verma et al., 2023](#)). In particular, many participants found a strong connection between social rejection and distrust in institutions and policies.

Conversely, focus group discussions indicated that conversations among members helped participants feel less lonely and more confident about their identities.

### **Comparison with Existing Literature**

These results are consistent with existing literature that has pointed out the difference between the law's recognition of transgender persons' rights and their actual inclusion in society in India. In line with [Bhattacharya et al. \(2022\)](#), the participants were concerned about poor implementation processes, institutionalized discrimination, and inadequate community representation in transgender policy development.

In addition, the study results are consistent with [Misra and Ferdous \(2017\)](#) assertion that legal reforms without institutional change could lead to only nominal inclusion. In alignment with [Arvind et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Verma et al. \(2023\)](#), the participants had experiences of mental health problems, economic deprivation, family abandonment, and social stigma. These experiences played a crucial role in the perception of the policies' legitimacy and institutions.

Finally, the results of this study are consistent with the literature from other countries that emphasizes the significance of institutions' responsiveness and participation in the perception of legislation aimed at equality. Nevertheless, this study advances the field of transgender policy research as it combines the factors of lived experience, participatory dialogue, and comparative analysis of before and after focus group discussions into one theoretical framework.

### **Implications for Transgender Rights Policy**

These results provide significant insight into how transgender policies are constructed in India and will be important in guiding future policies. First, the need for more participatory policymaking is highlighted, whereby transgenders take an active role in the consultations, implementation, and evaluation of policy. The participants made it clear that any policies which affect transgender people must factor in their experiences as well as their opinions in the formulation of such policies. This reinforces existing theories calling for participatory governance.

Secondly, the study has shown that there is a need to focus on institutional inclusion in areas such as healthcare, education, employment, and housing services. In many cases, participants linked institutional inclusion with the legitimacy of any particular policy. Therefore, any policy designed to protect transgender people must go beyond mere legislation and focus on institutional accountability and culturally sensitive service provision.

Further, the results imply the requirement for formal community consultations in the governance process of transgender policies. The establishment of advisory boards, community review panels, and participatory policy-making platforms may enhance institutional confidence and increase the effectiveness of policy implementation. Such participatory processes have been found to be imperative for fostering inclusivity, accountability, and social legitimacy among marginalized communities ([Whitzman et al., 2014](#)).

Finally, the research demonstrates the significance of incorporating mental health services, social protection, and community empowerment programs in transgender policy initiatives. The resolution of structural inequities and minority stress necessitates comprehensive solutions that go beyond legal recognition and towards social justice and institutional inclusion ([Whitzman et al., 2014](#)).

## PRACTICAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

### Implications for Policymakers

It is imperative to note that the results of this study emphasize the need for more inclusive and participatory approaches to be used when making policies on transgender issues in India. Policymakers must go beyond providing legal recognition by ensuring that there are legislative frameworks addressing the daily challenges faced by transgender people. There is evidence from past research indicating that legal changes without the required mechanisms to enforce implementation do not guarantee substantive equality ([Misra & Ferdous, 2017](#); [Sirohi & Mehra, 2025](#)).

It is thus important to ensure that inclusive legislation is drafted through the involvement of transgender people in all the stages of policy-making. This is one of the recommendations made by participants in this study. Community-based consultation procedures might help improve the legitimacy of policy formulation, enhance institutional accountability, and improve public trust in governance institutions ([Yanow, 2007](#)). This kind of approach has also been recommended in general studies on gender-sensitive governance and social inclusion ([Whitzman et al., 2014](#)).

In addition, the results also highlight the need for more stringent anti-discrimination mechanisms in public and private organizations. The policies should have complaint mechanisms, monitoring systems, and legal consequences that can effectively deal with discrimination within health services, educational institutions, employment places, and housing sectors. According to [Muruganandhan et al. \(2025\)](#), the inclusion of transgenders demands institutional changes that will consider both legal and systemic problems faced by marginalized communities. Thus, there is a need to ensure an implementable framework for the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026.

### Implications for Civil Society Organizations

It is evident from the findings that civil society organizations are vital in advancing the rights of transgenders, creating awareness and empowering the community. The findings reveal that advocacy organizations need to create awareness campaigns to help change social stigmatization, misrepresentation, and discrimination towards transgender individuals. Media discourse and public representation play an important role in shaping the public perception of gender and sexual diversity ([Ejaz & Moscovitz, 2020](#)). It is, therefore, vital for advocacy programs to create inclusive messages that can help reduce discrimination.

Advocacy programs based in the community are important in raising awareness regarding laws and policies concerning transgender communities. Some of the participants interviewed were unaware of the provisions of the Amendment Bill, which is why it is important for advocacy programs to engage communities in educating them about various policies. Civil society organizations can bridge the gap between the community and the institutional systems through such programs.

The results, in this case, reveal that it is important to consider building a better framework to support the mental well-being of transgender persons. Stigmatization, family alienation, public persecution, and marginalization have been seen to be major factors that contribute to the psychological fragility of transsexual people ([Arvind et al., 2021](#); [Roy et al., 2015](#)). It may be useful to provide counseling services and support groups as ways of mitigating minority stress and ensuring emotional wellness. [Kalra et al. \(2011\)](#), too, recognized the significance of psychosocial support networks in ensuring dignity and mental well-being of the disenfranchised.

### Implications for Healthcare and Educational Institutions

The results clearly show that there is an urgent need for institutional reforms that would consider gender in healthcare and education systems in India. The healthcare system must implement service delivery strategies that can accommodate transgender people and offer them all the necessary health care, psychological, and social support without any discrimination. There were several instances where participants reported being stigmatized and

disrespected in healthcare institutions, highlighting the general issue of marginalization concerning the provision of healthcare services ([Paul et al., 2017](#); [Jain et al., 2022](#)).

Hence, the reforms in the healthcare system should include gender-sensitive training sessions for healthcare professionals, mental health support, non-discrimination practices, and greater access to gender affirming care. It is crucial for healthcare institutions to develop a system of confidential complaints handling and ethical governance. [Pitre and Lingam \(2022\)](#) emphasized that gender-inclusive healthcare governance should be based on the principle of bodily autonomy, dignity, and access to health care services.

Institutional organizations also have to engage in holistic inclusion reformations to promote safe learning environments for transgender students. According to previous scholarly findings, it is evident that transgender people experience bullying and discrimination in learning institutions ([Thirunavukarasu & Simkiss, 2013](#)). Anti-discrimination and gender inclusion trainings, counseling, and other awareness programs promoting the acceptance of gender diversity are recommended.

Furthermore, the study points out the need for institutional policy development regarding social inclusion in public places and urban areas. Scholarly research on safety interventions and public vulnerability in South Asian cities highlights the importance of institutional policies and planning related to marginalized communities ([Mowri et al., 2024](#)). Therefore, both health care institutions and educational organizations have to develop long-term inclusion policies capable of ensuring the respect, protection, and equality of transgender people.

## LIMITATIONS

However, this study is subject to several limitations that must be considered while interpreting the findings. The first limitation is geographical since the study is restricted to Delhi NCR. The generalizability of the findings to transgender people living in other regions of India under different sociocultural, economic, and political environments would be difficult. Discrimination, access to institutions, and policies can differ from one location to another depending on whether it is an urban or rural setting.

The second limitation concerns the research design. Since purposive and snowball sampling were used for identifying participants, the sample may not be adequately diverse in terms of age, caste, socioeconomic background, and gender identity of the respondents. Thus, the findings cannot be considered universally generalizable to other transgender populations.

The third limitation concerns the qualitative aspect of the research, which makes data interpretation subjective to some extent. Thematic analysis is based on how participants perceive the situation, what the researcher interprets, and the context of events. Finally, due to time limitations, it was challenging to engage participants for an extended period of time and conduct long-term follow-up analysis.

## CONCLUSION

This study employed a comparative pre- and post-focus group analysis to explore the perception and lived experiences of transgender people in Delhi NCR with regard to TPA Bill 2026. The results indicate that transgender people's perspectives on legislative change are strongly influenced by their experiences of discrimination and marginalization in society, as well as institutional contexts. While many recognised the symbolic value of legal recognition and policy reforms, there was a wide understanding of the lack of institutional accountability, weak implementation processes and a lack of community engagement in the policy development process.

The study indicated that one of the major themes that arose during the pre-focus group stage was distrust in the implementation of a policy. Participants often linked the experiences of health care providers discriminating against transgender individuals or excluding them from employment and/or families with doubt about the actual impact of

transgender reforms in the public sphere. The results corroborate other academic studies which have highlighted that legal recognition will not bring substantive equality and genuine social inclusion ([Misra & Ferdous, 2017](#)) and ([Bhattacharya et al., 2022](#)). Structural inequalities remain to influence the understanding of both institutions' legitimacy and responsiveness to transgender communities.

After the focus group discussions, there were significant changes in perceptions and understanding of policy. Collective dialogue led to higher awareness of the Amendment Bill, greater community cohesion and more critical engagement with participatory governance and institutional inclusion issues. It was pointed out that more and more, transgender communities were needed to be directly involved in the process of consulting, planning for implementation, and assessing policies. The results of this study suggest that dialogic involvement and participatory methods can be effective in enhancing the political awareness, affirmation of identity and empowerment of marginalized groups.

This study makes a valuable contribution to the field of gender and policy scholarship by combining lived experience analysis, participatory discussion and comparative thematic interpretation in one qualitative methodology. This research differs significantly from much of the work which addresses the legal analysis or institutional critique, by prioritizing the voices of transsexuals and their lived experiences in the context of modern legislative discourse. The combined conceptualization of Intersectionality Theory and Minority Stress Theory adds to the understanding of how structural inequalities, social stigma, and emotional distress contribute to perceptions of governance, inclusion, and policy legitimacy.

The results also offer valuable insights into the inclusion of trans people in democratic governance systems in India. Transgender inclusion is not just a matter of having the law recognize gender identity and expression; it is about a shift in how institutions are structured, community members are engaged, and social reforms are continued. Policies to consider should therefore focus on participatory governance, accessing healthcare, anti-discrimination enforcement, economic inclusion, mental health and gender-sensitive institutional practices for transgender people. It is essential to tackle the structural barriers which prevent transgender people from enjoying dignity, safety and equal citizenship through the combined efforts of policy makers, health providers, educational institutions and civil society actors.

The study concludes that there is a need to enhance community led consultation mechanisms, strengthen institutional accountability mechanisms, expand inclusive healthcare services, and conduct gender-sensitivity training in public institutions in order to promote greater participation, inclusion and awareness in public institutions. Legislative changes should also include clear mechanisms for complaints and more effective enforcement measures that can deal with discrimination in health care, employment, education and housing.

Future studies need to investigate transgender policy perceptions beyond urban areas like Delhi NCR to other rural and/or regional areas of India. Comparative studies across states, socioeconomic categories, and gender-diversity categories would further enhance the understanding of the impact of culture, institutions and political context on experiences of inclusion/exclusion. Longitudinal studies could also yield valuable information regarding the changes in transgender policy perceptions over the years as a function of changing legal structures and sociopolitical contexts.

## AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

### CRedit author statement / Authors Contribution

**Kashish Dua:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing — original draft, Visualization, Software, Data curation, Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing — review & editing.

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