

Unveiling Gender Justice Challenges Faced by Transgender Individuals in a Developing Country: An In-Depth Analysis

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Abstract

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the gender justice challenges faced by transgender individuals in Khulna, Bangladesh through the lens of just city theory. Despite the legal recognition of the Transgender community in 2013, they continue to experience social isolation, violence and systemic discrimination. The research investigates how democratic practices are undermined, how the preservation of transgender identity as a distinct group is obstructed and how material inequality continues to weaken their pursuit of social justice. Using purposive sampling, 15 in-depth face-to-face interviews with transgender individuals were conducted to capture lived experiences. The findings highlight four critical factors: the daily social, economic, political and cultural struggles transgender people endure; the structural issues driving these struggles; the impact of these problems on democracy, identity and equality; and their broader implications for social justice when assessed against the just city paradigm. The study also reveals a persistent behavioral challenge within the majority population who often fail to recognize transgender people as distinct genders beyond male and female. This lack of recognition perpetuates fear and exclusion, trapping transgender individuals in a cycle that limits their rights, equality and full participation in society.

Keywords: Gender Justice; Human Rights; Theory of Fear; Inclusive Society; Just City

1 Introduction

The quest for gender justice is a critical aspect of promoting equality and human rights across the globe. However, in developing countries, this pursuit becomes even more challenging as marginalized communities, such as transgender individuals, face unique obstacles in their fight for justice and recognition [13]. This research paper aims to delve into the complexities and challenges encountered by transgender individuals within a developing country, examining the issues through the lens of gender justice and the just city theory.

Gender justice entails treating everyone with justice and equality while recognizing that sociocultural dynamics of power, discrimination and institutional barriers still exist. Individuals who identify as transgender, in particular, experience a wide range of injustices, such as discrimination in society, a lack of societal safety features, difficulty accessing basic rights and disproportionately high rates of violence and harassment [9]. In developing country, where customary practices and conservative attitudes may worsen the marginalization transgender communities already experience, these difficulties multiply [14].

The just city idea also offers a comprehensive structure for examining transgender people's experiences in urban setting. In accordance with Susan Fainstein's "Just City" concept, societies should work toward social justice and equality in a variety of sectors, including housing, education, transportation and government because theoretically this concept

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emphasizes the values of justice and inclusion in urban development through promoting democracy, diversity and material equality [5,6]. It argues that cities need to be planned to promote inclusion, equity and democratic participation. In order to establish a truly just city, the idea emphasizes the significance of addressing gender inequalities. This research intends to offer light on the collaboration between gender justice and the development of inclusive, equitable cities through an exploration at how cities can offer a framework that promotes the rights and dignity of transgender people.

This study addresses the difficulties experienced by transgender people in a particular developing country using a wide range of academic research, case studies, and qualitative analysis. We hope to determine significant opportunities for advancement in gender justice through this in-depth assessment, such as behavioral changes, social programs, public awareness campaigns and physical planning. This study contributes to the continuing debate about gender justice and the creation of just cities by highlighting the obstacles and proposing potential solutions.

2 Approach

This chapter offers a methodical, theoretical explanation of the approach used for this study. To accomplish the aims and objectives of this study, it is helpful to systematically organize the entire task, including experience, observations, data collection, data analysis and logical expression.

According to Bryman purposive sampling aims to select instances and participants in a strategic way such that they are appropriate to the research issues being considered [1]. Following the focus, probing and prompt questions under each main question, fifteen transgender individuals were selected from the thirteen clusters of transgender people residing in Khulna, Bangladesh for in-depth interviews. This allowed the individuals to respond without restriction.

It was challenging for an outsider to attain access to transgender people to conduct interviews. Based on the suggestion of the research team, contact with the executive director of a community welfare association for detached human welfare was established, in order to become acquainted with the subject of the study and get access to their community. Their workplace was visited on numerous occasions solely to get to know the transgender staff members and form relationships with them. In addition, they were being contacted them several times to break the ice and wish them on several occasions to gain their trust so they could talk to me about anything without hesitation. Consent was obtained from each respondent as part of the questionnaire for the ethical consideration.

Beforehand the audio interview material was transformed into the text version in accordance with the main questions of the interview for the purpose to do a thematic analysis of data. Subsequently, the soft version of interviews was imported into the NVivo software. In order to classify them based on the theme (table 2.1) of a) Problems in social, economic, political and cultural aspects that they have to face in their everyday life and b) Underlying issues of those problems to explore the barriers to joining the mainstream of the society and c) Potential analytical process and theoretical concept to that might be used to assist change the current scenario. Then, all of the interviews one at a time were opened, explored through scanning and highlighted the important issue using different colors for coding. Stipes in coding for easy examination of differentially categorized data, NVivo has been used.

Finally, after gathering the descriptive codes and creating a hierarchical graph to show the multidimensional meaning from examining the influence of the problems and underlying issues and discussing the potential way forward to determine significant opportunities for advancement in gender justice and to offer just city through working on behavioral changes, social programs, public awareness campaigns and physical planning. After exploring the data, a text search query was used to determine the direction. Additionally, word clouds were created with NVivo for the display of the developed themes for thematic analysis of the interview data have been clearly summarized.

Table 1 Name of the developed themes and sub themes for thematic analysis.

Name of section	Name of theme	Name of sub theme
1 st theme “3.1”	Significant problems faced by the transgender people having a normal life like other citizens (“What” aspect)	

2 nd theme "3.2"	Underlying issue of the emerged problems faced by the transgender people having a normal life like other citizens ("Why" aspect)	
"3.2.1"		Responsible underlying issues to create barriers for transgender people to achieve their Democracy
"3.2.2"		Responsible underlying issues to create barriers to protect the existence of transgender people to preserve the diversity and ensure Inclusivity of the society
"3.2.3"		Responsible underlying issues to create barriers for transgender people to establish their Material Equality
"3.2.4"		How underlying issues of their faced problems for the transgender people stuck in the frame of theory of fear
3 rd theme "3.3"	Potential analytical process and theoretical concept to that might be used to assist change the current scenario	
"3.3.1"		How behavioral change model can influence to change the stereotype perception towards transgender to ensure Gender Justice
"3.3.2"		How Gender Justice can offer a Just City: a theoretical perspective

Source: Authors generated in NVivo, 2024.

This table (1) outlines the thematic structure of the analysis presenting a sequential progression from the identification of significant problems faced by transgender people (Section 3.1 – what), to the examination of the underlying issues causing these problems (Section 3.2 – why) and finally to the analytical and theoretical approaches proposed to address the existing challenges (Section 3.3 – how). The sub-themes further categorize barriers related to democracy, inclusivity and material equality and explain how these barriers are reinforced through the theory of fear, while also indicating potential pathways for change through behavioral change models and gender justice frameworks aligned with the Just City theory.

3 Findings

A variety of significant findings from the study 'Unveiling Gender Justice Challenges Faced by Transgender Individuals in a Developing Country' offer light on the specific and ongoing obstacles faced by transgender people in the setting of developing nations. The following significant findings have been established through extensive data analysis and in-depth interviews with transgender people.

3.1 What Are the Significant Problems Faced by the Transgender People Having a Normal Life in the Society like Other Citizens?

All of the major issues confronting transgender persons are classified into four categories (table 2) depending on elements such as a. social, b. economic, c. political and d. cultural life. These problems will be classified using these four aspects of life rather than the issue of removing barriers to transgender people achieving democracy, establishing their material equality and ensuring their existence as the concept of preserving a diverse group of our society because many of the problems faced by transgender people are internally linked with more than one issue, as mentioned in the first part of this sentence. Given the adaptability of open-ended questionnaire responses, the following 'codes,' depending on the selected indicators, are brief phrases that symbolically express transgender people's difficulty in establishing their citizen rights like other citizens. And the NVivo cluster analysis was carried out based on the 'word similarity' of the source data.

Table 2 Generated codes from interview data for thematic (3A) analysis.

Aspects of Life	Name of the descriptive codes indicating the problems	Sources (Interviews)
Social	Forced to Join Transgender Community	11
	Forced to Leave Education	9
	Poor Access to Public Health Service	10
	Unsecured Social Prestige and life	12
Economic	Poor Opportunity to Choose Livelihood Strategy	12
	Poor Opportunity to Build Assets and Social	13
	Poor Working Skill	12
	Few Programs for Rehabilitating Them form Livelihood Strategy	2
	No Quota in Government Job Except Traffic Police	1
	Unfriend Working Environment	6
Political	Internal Torture within Community	14
	Poor Opportunity to Raise Voice	12
Cultural	Ragging Within the Community	14
	Poor Access to Public Services	13

Source: Authors 2024 (generated in NVivo).

This table (2) presents the key descriptive codes identifying the major problems faced by transgender people across four aspects of life social, economic, political and cultural. It highlights recurring challenges such as exclusion from education and health services, limited livelihood opportunities, insecure social status, restricted political voice and internal and cultural forms of marginalization. The source counts indicate the frequency and intensity of these issues as reflected in the interview data.

3.2 Why Are These Significant Problems Emerged in the Transgender People Having a Normal Life in the Society like Other Citizens?

The responses of those Transgender persons were asked probing questions to gain an insight of their ideas on why they have to confront such challenges in their life, which create hurdles to entering the mainstream of society as another citizen. A table (3) is going to be used to offer an overview of the correlations of the emerging underlying concerns from the difficulties listed in table (2). To understand why transgender people continue to face significant barriers in living a normal life comparable to other citizens, in-depth probing questions were posed during the interviews. These questions aimed to capture participants' own interpretations of the structural, social, economic, political and cultural forces that generate and sustain the challenges identified in Section 3.1. The responses reveal that these problems do not emerge in isolation, rather they are deeply rooted in interconnected underlying issues that systematically prevent transgender people from entering the social mainstream as equal citizens. Based on the interview data, Table 3 presents an overview of how the descriptive codes (problem-focused experiences) are correlated with analytical codes (underlying causal mechanisms) across different aspects of life. This thematic (3B) analysis illustrates how everyday problems experienced by transgender people are shaped by broader patterns of exclusion, power relations and social norms. The table also aligns these analytical codes with the core hallmarks of the 'Just City' framework Democracy (sub theme 3.2.1), Inclusivity (sub theme 3.2.2) and Material Equality (sub theme 3.2.3) to assess how justice is constrained in multiple dimensions of transgender lives for the 2nd theme and section 3.2. Social, Economic, Political, Cultural dimensions marginalization thus acts as both a cause and a consequence of broader structural exclusion.

Table 3 Generated codes from interview data for thematic (3B) analysis.

Aspects of Life	Descriptive codes indicating problems (based on Focus questions and Probes)	Sources (Interviews)	Analytical codes indicating underlying issues of these problems (Based on Probes and Prompts)	Source (Interviews)	Respective hallmarks (sub themes) of Just City for further detail explanation to assess the transgender people's obstacles and to develop the analytical codes
Social	Forced to Join Transgender Community	11	Negative social construction generates ignorance	6	Democracy Inclusivity
			Traditional practice	10	Democracy
			Stereotype negative behaviour	8	Inclusivity
			Unwelcomed identity	10	Inclusivity
	Forced to Leave Education	9	Domination of Guru Maa (the leader of every transgender cluster)	9	Democracy
			Traditional practice	8	Democracy
			Unwelcomed identity	9	Democracy
	Poor Access to Public Health Service	10	Unwelcomed identity	2	
			Unspecified access to public services	2	Material equality
	Unsecured Social Prestige and life	12	Unwelcomed identity	6	Inclusivity
			Communication gap generates misconception towards transgender people	2	Inclusivity
Economic	Poor Opportunity to Choose Livelihood Strategy	12	Domination of Guru Maa	10	Democracy
			Poor access to formal and informal education	8	Material equality
			Traditional practice	12	Democracy
	Poor Opportunity to Build Assets and Social Capital	13	Domination of Guru Maa	12	Democracy
			Poor access to formal and informal education		Inclusivity
			Communication gap generates misconception towards transgender people	2	Inclusivity
	Poor Working Skill	12	Traditional occupation of extortion	12	Inclusivity
			Poor access to formal and informal education	8	Inclusivity
	Few Programs for Rehabilitating Them form Livelihood Strategy	2	Ignorance towards transgender people	1	Material equality
			Silent Corruption	2	Material equality

	No Quota in Government Job Except Traffic Police	1	Ignorance towards transgender people	1	Material equality
	Unfriend Working Environment	6	Traditional practice	6	Democracy
			Traditional occupation of extortion	5	Inclusivity
			Stereotype negative behaviour	4	Inclusivity
			Unwelcomed identity	6	Inclusivity Democracy
Political	Internal Torture within Community	14	Domination of Guru Maa	12	Democracy
			Traditional practice	12	Democracy
	Poor Opportunity to Raise Voice	12	Domination of Guru Maa	12	Democracy
			Communication gap	10	Inclusivity
			Unspecified access to public services	2	Material equality
Cultural	Ragging Within the Community	14	Domination of Guru Maa	14	Democracy
			Traditional practice	14	Democracy
	Poor Access to Public Services	13	Unwelcomed identity	13	Material equality Inclusivity
			Communication gap generates misconception towards transgender people	10	Inclusivity
			Ignorance towards transgender people	12	Material equality
			Unspecified access to public services	2	Material equality
			Stereotype negative behavior	8	Inclusivity

Source: Authors generated in 2024

Across all aspects of life, the analysis reveals that these underlying issues operate not merely as isolated barriers but as interconnected mechanisms of control. They shape behavior, restrict choices and discipline transgender people into socially sanctioned positions. This dynamic explains how transgender people remain trapped within recurring patterns of exclusion despite individual resilience and adaptive strategies.

Therefore, section 3.2.4 advances this analysis by situating these underlying issues within the framework of the 'Theory of Fear'. It demonstrates how fear of social rejection, economic insecurity, violence and institutional punishment functions as a governing force (by Guru Maa (the leader of every transgender cluster)) that sustains domination, discourages resistance and normalizes injustice. Through this lens, fear emerges as a central mechanism through which barriers to democracy, inclusivity and material equality are reproduced in transgender people's everyday lives.

After identifying the significant problems (section 3.1) and their underlying influential issues (sub sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3), the impact of the descriptive codes, acting as obstacles to the corresponding analytical codes will be critically discussed in sub section 3.3.4 under section 3.2, deepening the understanding of how injustice is structurally maintained.

3.2.1 3.2.4 How Underlying Issues of Faced Problems by the Transgender People Stuck in the Frame of Theory of Fear?

The analytical codes identified in sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the third chapter, which focus on the problems and underlying issues shaping transgender people's existence, are employed here to construct a framework that demonstrates their broader implications. These issues are often confined within the theoretical frame of fear, casting transgender individuals as untouchable and excluded from the mainstream of society. This dynamic is not simply situational but cyclical, repeatedly reinforcing itself through cultural traditions and social practices. As a result, transgender people remain marginalized and systematically pushed outside accepted norms. By situating these challenges within this framework, it becomes clear how deeply embedded fear and stigma continue to shape cultural perceptions since the very inception of societal structures.

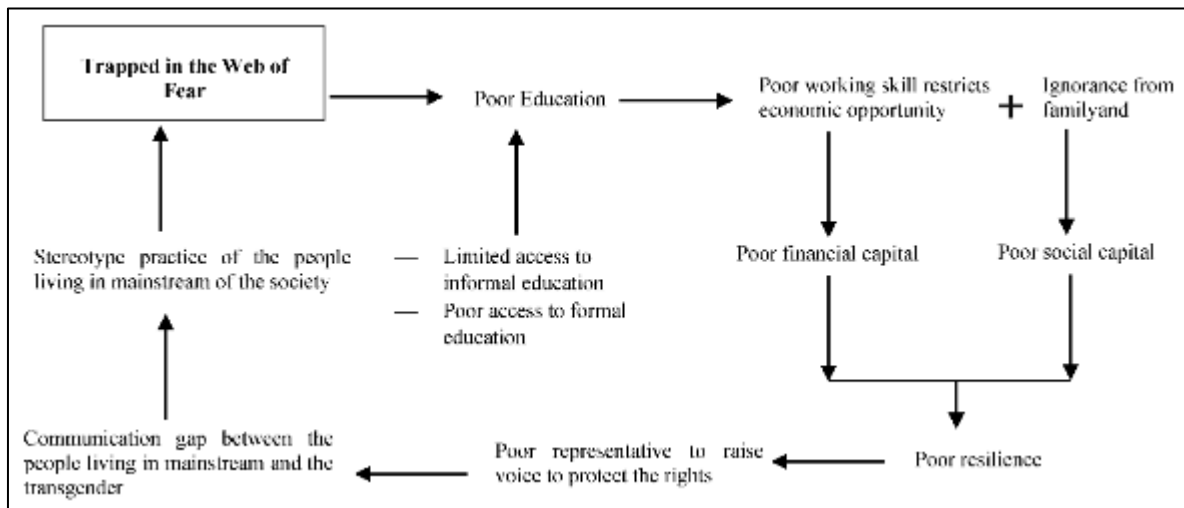


Figure 1 Process of remaining untouchable the existence of the transgender people. Source: Author generated, 2024

Through the perspective of the Theory of Fear, this analysis directs by previous to thematic areas (3.1 and 3.2) towards the circumstances leading to their entrapment, explained by the figure 1 for the sub theme 3.2.4. of the thematic analysis for this study. This study intends to increase awareness about the issues experienced by transgender people and advocate for the deconstruction of discriminatory systems by shedding light on the widespread influence of fear. This figure (1) illustrates how transgender people become trapped in a cyclical web of fear where stereotype practice, communication gaps with mainstream society and limited access to formal and informal education lead to poor working skills. These constraints restrict economic opportunities resulting in weak financial and social capital, low resilience and limited capacity to raise their voices to protect their rights. The cycle is further reinforced by ignorance from family and society, perpetuating exclusion and fear across social, economic and political dimensions.

Transgender people are frequently subjected to the theory of fear, which promotes stereotypes and stigma. The fear of the unknown in society, along with deeply established biases, leads in the systematic exclusion of transgender persons from different sectors of life, such as job, healthcare and social acceptability. Transgender people endure high levels of prejudice and violence as a result of the fear and misinformation around their identities [17].

Societal marginalization is one of the consequences as Transgender people are frequently imprisoned in an untouchable status where societal rules and prejudices limit their capacity to fully engage in society. This exclusion presents itself in a variety of ways, including limited access to school, work and housing. Transgender people face disproportionately high rates of homelessness, unemployment, and poverty as a result of their social marginalization [8]. According to Bockting et al. (2013), transgender people had greater rates of suicide attempts and self-harm than the general population, underscoring the serious mental health effects of social indifference [3].

Legal and policy implementation obstacles is one of the main unfortunates as Transgender people frequently confront legal and policy obstacles that exacerbate their marginalization. Discriminatory legislation and a lack of inclusive approach for policies implementation make it difficult for them to get essential rights such as healthcare, identity cards, and legal safeguards. Transgender people face considerable barriers to getting adequate healthcare treatments owing to discriminatory behaviors and a lack of professional training [16].

3.3 Potential Analytical Process and Theoretical Concept to That Might Be Used to Assist Change the Current Scenario

In this section, the correlation (figure 3.3) has been developed among theory of fear, behavioral change model, gender justice and just city.

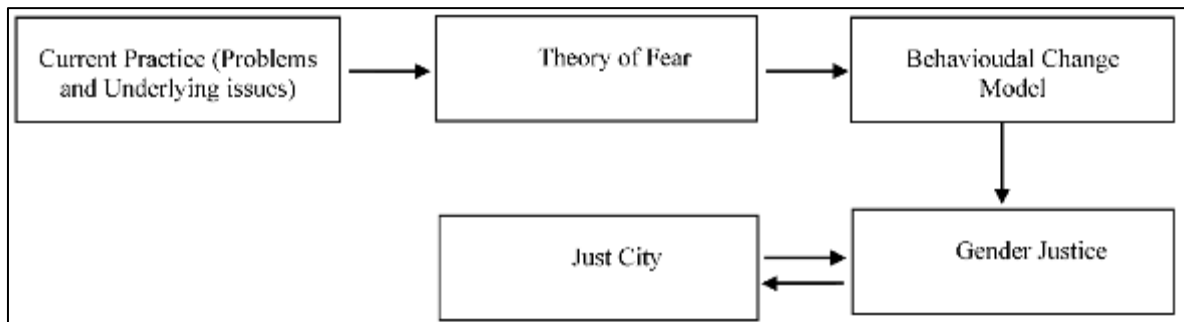


Figure 2 Analytical process and theoretical concept to change the current scenario. Source: Author generated, 2024

The figure (2) illustrates a conceptual framework linking current practices and underlying issues to a broader vision of a just city. It shows that understanding problems through the theory of fear informs a behavioral change model, which promotes gender justice. Achieving gender justice, in turn, contributes to the realization of a Just City, with a reciprocal relationship highlighting the role of justice in shaping equitable urban practices.

3.3.1 How Behavioral Change Model Can Influence to Change the Stereotype Perception Towards Transgender to Ensure Gender Justice

Stereotypical views of transgender people frequently result in their marginalization, discrimination and a lack of gender justice. By confronting and modifying these assumptions, using a behavioral change paradigm can significantly advance knowledge, acceptance and equality for transgender people [23].

- **Education and Awareness:** A behavioral change strategy can dispel myths and promote empathy by offering thorough education and raising knowledge about transgender identities and experiences [15]. Stereotypes can be destroyed by accurately disseminating knowledge through educational campaigns, workshops and media activities [22].
- **Exposure to Positive Role Models:** Promoting inspiring figures for others by highlighting positive role models from the transgender community can help eliminate prejudices. People's perceptions of transgender people's identity restrictions are challenged when they observe successful transgender people in a variety of professions, including politics, the arts and intellectuals [7].
- **Media Representation:** Public perceptions are significantly shaped by the media. Stereotypes can be destroyed and acceptance cultivated through promoting truthful and positive representations of transgender people in the media [18]. Gender justice could be aided by greater exposure and a range of portrayals that normalize transgender identities.
- **Advocacy and Activism:** Participating in advocacy and activism campaigns conducted by transgender people and their supporters can increase public awareness, prevent discrimination and advance legislative change [10]. These initiatives can help create a more equitable and inclusive society by eliminating adverse preconceptions.
- **Sensitization Training:** Sensitization training can give staff members the knowledge and abilities required to communicate with transgender people in a respectful and inclusive approach in a wide range of sectors, involving healthcare, education and the workplace [2]. Such education may assistance create an atmosphere of acceptance and reduce stigma and discrimination.

Implementing a behavioral change model encompassing advocacy, sensitization training, advocacy, education and positive portrayal can successfully evolve negative stereotypes concerning transgender people. This approach serves in promising gender justice while establishing a more inclusive society by eliminating biases, encouraging understanding and promoting acceptance.

3.3.2 *How Gender Justice can offer a Just City: a theoretical perspective*

Establishing equitable societies and ensuring social justice both require Gender Justice. It includes ensuring that people of all genders obtain equitable treatment and equal opportunity while resisting biases and discrimination based on gender. The idea of a "just city" emerges as a theoretical framework that aspires for inclusivity, accessibility and justice when Gender Justice in urban contexts is examined. The connection of Gender Justice and the idea of a Just City will be addressed in this analysis, which can be backed up by appropriate theoretical perspectives.

- **Gendered Space and the Just City:** The concept of gendered space recognizes how the balance of power and gender stereotypes in society generate and reflect urban setting. It is critical to consider how urban settings can either encourage or discourage gender inequality within the context of the just city. Feminist geographers, for instance, argue that geographic isolation and restricted access to opportunities and resources could worsen gender inequality [19]. It is necessary to examine and challenge the gendered components of urban design, transportation, housing and public services in order to accomplish gender justice within the just city.
- **Intersectionality and Inclusive Urban Policies:** The term "intersectionality," which was introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw, highlights the ways that numerous social identities and oppressive institutions are interconnected [4]. Recognizing and resolving intersectionality is crucial in the context of gender justice within the just city to ensure inclusivity for all people. The different experiences of people depending on their gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and other intersecting identities must be taken into consideration by implanting urban policies and interventions [24]. Cities may work to establish democratic situations that address the needs of marginalized communities firstly by incorporating an intersectional perspective into implementing urban design and legislation.
- **Participatory Governance and Gender Justice:** In order to achieve a just city, the participatory governance idea is required. It focuses emphasis on how individuals and communities can actively participate in the decision-making processes that define urban settings. It is crucial to provide women and gender minorities with opportunities for significant participation and representation in urban governance in order to achieve Gender Justice [11]. Policies can better address the unique issues encountered by different genders by incorporating diverse voices in decision-making which promotes an inclusive and just urban environment.
- **Safety, Violence and Public Spaces:** In urban areas, safety is a significant concern, particularly for women as well as gender minorities. Addressing the incidence of gender-based violence and establishing secure public spaces for all people is essential for a just city. Safer cities can be created by considering account ideas like "defensible space" [20] and "eyes on the street" [12]. Additionally, for the promotion of gender justice in urban contexts, programs that resist cultural norms and attitudes that contribute to violence against any gender group, like educational campaigns and community participation, are essential.

In order to achieve Gender Justice within the constraints of a Just City, an integrated approach that addresses gender biases, encourages inclusivity and assures equitable opportunity for everyone is required. Cities can work to build equitable environments by looking at the gendered aspects of urban space, incorporating intersectionality, promoting participatory governance and addressing safety issues. It is important to recognize that putting these changes into practice calls for cooperation among legislators, urban planners, activists and communities in order to translate theoretical concepts into real-world actions that promote Gender Justice.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research titled "Unveiling Gender Justice Challenges Faced by Transgender Individuals in a Developing Country: An In-depth Analysis" sheds light on the pressing issues surrounding gender justice within the context of a developing country. By employing the lens of just city theory and exploring the potentiality of a behavioral change model, this study has highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by transgender individuals in accessing justice and achieving gender equality.

The research has underscored the significance of addressing Gender Justice not only in terms of legal frameworks but also in terms of social, economic and cultural dimensions. It has revealed the complex interplay of power dynamics, discrimination and marginalization that transgender individuals experience further emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to promoting gender justice.

By incorporating the just city theory, this research has emphasized the importance of creating inclusive urban spaces that respect and accommodate the rights and needs of transgender individuals. It has identified the systemic barriers and social inequalities that hinder their access to justice, such as limited legal protections, lack of healthcare services, inadequate educational opportunities and social stigma. These findings call for targeted interventions and policy

reforms to create an enabling environment that ensures gender justice and upholds the rights of transgender individuals.

Additionally, the exploration of a behavioral change model highlights the potential for transformative action and societal progress. By recognizing the role of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in perpetuating or challenging gender injustice, this research offers insights into strategies for promoting positive change. It emphasizes the significance of awareness campaigns, education and community engagement to foster gender justice and a more inclusive and equitable society.

Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on Gender Justice challenges faced by transgender individuals in developing countries. It underscores the urgency of addressing these issues, not only from a legal standpoint but also by tackling the underlying social and cultural norms that perpetuate discrimination. By integrating the Just City theory and the potentiality of a behavioral change model, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding, analyzing and promoting Gender Justice for transgender individuals, ultimately working towards a more equitable and inclusive society.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Statement of ethical approval

The present study involving human participants was conducted following ethical standards and guidelines. Ethical approval was obtained from Research and Innovation Centre of Khulna University, Bangladesh.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Each of the 15 in-depth case study participants from the transgender community voluntarily agreed to participate after being fully informed about the purpose, process, potential risks and utilizations of the research. Participants were assured of confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences.

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