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Instituting and protecting global transgender rights

HRC

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Introduction

Instituting and protecting global transgender rights is one of the most pressing and vital issues that the world deals with. People who identify as transgender face major discrimination, violence, and legal difficulties everywhere in the world. These difficulties arise from multiple factors, such as internalized biases and religions prohibiting it. This Research Report will further explore and explain the challenges transgender people face and what may be done about them.

Definition of Key Terms

Cisgender

Refers to individuals whose sexual identity aligns with the gender that was assigned to them at birth.

Gender dysphoria

A psychological condition where someone does not identify with the gender that was assigned to them at birth.

Gender-affirming care

Medical, psychological, or social care that supports an individual's gender identity. This may include surgical procedures, hormone therapy, or counseling.

Social stigma

The negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease.

Transgender

Refers to individuals whose gender identity does not align with their assigned gender at birth.

Non-binary

Refers to a sexual identity that does not fit within the traditional gender identities of male and female.

General Overview

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Despite progress in some states, transgender people all over the world still face significant barriers to accessing fundamental human rights such as proper healthcare and legal recognition.

Historical context

This is and will remain a very complex issue. Many factors, such as cultural and religious reasons, have caused us to be in the situation we are in today. Throughout history, transgender people have existed in many societies; for example, the hijra community in South Asia has been known for centuries and is often seen as a third gender; it's still recognized as so throughout countries in the Indian subcontinent. Another example is many Indigenous cultures across North America, where two-spirit individuals held specific positions within their communities. Colonialism, and with that, the spread of Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), has played a significant role in erasing and suppressing these cultural identities. These colonial powers strictly enforced their binary gender norms, purely male and female.

Religion has been a major force against the implementation of transgender rights. Most interpretations of the major religions, mainly Christianity and Islam, have regularly framed transgender people to be incompatible with their religious doctrines, even going as far as implementing strict laws prohibiting identifying as transgender, often penalized with very harsh punishments.

In the modern era, the fight for transgender rights gained a lot of visibility, together with movements for gay and lesbian individuals. The second half of the 20th century marked a turning point; activism started gaining more and more traction; the catalyst for this movement was the Stonewall Riots in 1969. This happened after the NYC police raided a gay bar called the Stonewall

Inn, causing mass outrage; the subsequent days were filled with protests and riots, where they weren't shy of using violence. Reports of this caused a wave of activism all over, which created a platform for transgender rights to be discussed as they were often, and still are, lagging behind those of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.

The HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s hardly affected the transgender community as well as the LGBTQ+ community as a whole. This pandemic exposed the lack of healthcare access this community faced. The number of advocacy groups also increased with more issues being exposed. Their hard work did partly pay off as, in the early years of the current century, many advancements were made in the legalization and protection of transgender people. Many countries legalized being transgender, gave access to gender-affirming healthcare, and anti-discrimination laws were put in place to protect these vulnerable communities.

Current challenges

Despite progress being made, opposing forces and their support have also grown. With the rise of far-right ideologies, anti-trans rhetoric has also grown. Arguments used are that they value protecting traditional values, such as the importance of the nuclear family. Another argument used is that they want to preserve fairness in sports, as they feel like women who were assigned females at birth have an unfair advantage over cis women. Some governments have now introduced laws that target transgender individuals; these include prohibiting gender-affirming care for minors and banning the discussion of gender identity in schools.

Many countries have yet to implement gender-affirming healthcare, such as hormone therapy and sex changes with surgical help. Many healthcare professionals in regions where it is legal do not have adequate training on transgender issues, which results in insufficient or even harmful care. In many countries, transgender people do not have access to the proper mental health services, which leads to many problems, with 32 to 50 percent of transgender people attempting suicide, varying by country.

Many countries still do not recognize or even criminalize transgender people; this can be due to various reasons, the most prominent being, of course, religion. All major religions prohibit being transgender; this has severe effects on these people as religion is often intertwined with the law, making being transgender illegal with severe penalties attached to it, sometimes going as far as the death penalty.

Even when being transgender is legalized, there is still a huge social stigma against it, a prime example being Latin America, which has some of the highest violence rates against transgender people despite very progressive legal frameworks in countries like Argentina and Uruguay. Social stigma also hinders transgender individuals in the workspace. These are some statistics based on research in the USA: Transgender adults are twice as likely to be unemployed. Cisgender individuals make 32 percent more money a year than their transgender counterparts, even when the latter have similar or higher education levels. People who identify as transgender also report it's harder for them to get promoted and that they feel less supported by their managers. This makes their day-to-day life incredibly complicated and can enormously affect their mental health.

Social stigma often already forms in children. Trans children frequently have a very tough time in school. Children can usually be very harsh and mean because they do not have the social awareness and empathy that trans youth require. Kids who identify as transgender, therefore, frequently face ridicule, bullying, and other forms of discriminatory remarks from their peers, which may cause them to get anxiety, depression, or possibly hurt themselves. Another issue trans youth may face is being deadnamed (occurs when someone uses the name transgender individuals used when still identifying with their assigned gender at birth) by their classmates as well as school faculty. Trans youth are often not allowed to use the restrooms and changing rooms that they'd prefer, making them very uncomfortable when being forced to share these private rooms with the wrong genders. As mentioned earlier, about 32-50% of transgender people globally have tried to commit suicide; this is a disproportionately large number compared to ordinary, cis-gendered people. Apart from suicidal thoughts, transgender people, in general, face way more mental health problems than the average person. A 10-year-long Swedish study found that individuals dealing with gender incongruence were six times more likely to have a mood or anxiety disorder than the general population, were three times more likely to be prescribed antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications, and more than six times as likely to attempt suicide resulting in hospitalization. The study also found that transgender individuals who had undergone gender-affirming surgery were significantly less likely to seek mental health treatment for depression and anxiety disorders, further highlighting the importance of allowing these types of procedures.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
1897	Alfred Hirschfeld creates the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee, the first organisation that fought against anti-gay laws.
1952	Christine Jorgensen becomes the first widely known individual to undergo gender affirming surgery.
2007	The Yogyakarta Principles are introduced, a group of Human Rights experts meet up in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and set up international principles regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.
2011	The UNHRC adopts the first resolution regarding LGBTQ+ rights
2019	The WHO approved resolution to remove gender identity disorder from their global manual of diagnoses

Major Parties Involved

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch, an NGO that monitors transgender rights globally and reports possible violations, plays a significant role in resolving the issue. It provides statistics and observations concerning the issue, assisting the major parties in obtaining reliable information.

Media and Corporations

Media and corporations play a vital role in addressing the issue. They are immensely significant in shaping people's opinions of transgender people. This changes how people view them and influence societal norms. Furthermore, it raises awareness of the issue and informs people

about the widespread misconceptions. Documentaries, news reports, and fictional representations have helped build empathy and humanize them in order to construct an inclusive society. Moreover, the media could be a powerful tool in showing advocacy and support towards transgender people by challenging discriminatory practices and promoting inclusive messages. Education campaigns could further ensure that transgender people are included and welcomed in society and that myths about them are dispelled. However, it could also worsen the situation by allowing more misconceptions to be created and offering a platform for opposition voices.

Religious Institutions

Religious institutions and groups often oppose the LGBTQI+ community and transgender individuals. As mentioned earlier, religious authorities such as Roman Catholicism, Southern Baptist churches, and some Evangelical groups, as well as the Orthodox Judaism, Islamic authorities, and many traditional Hindu and Buddhist groups, view transgender identities as incompatible with their teachings. This further fuels hate toward transgender people and strengthens the social stigma faced by them. It also contrasts traditional beliefs with modernization, making the issue more challenging.

Stonewall

Stonewall, a UK-based LGBTQI+ organization, works to advance transgender rights in the United Kingdom and around the globe. Founded in 1989, the organization began focusing on transgender rights in 2015. Stonewall provides resources and support to accomplish an inclusive society for transgender individuals. For instance, its Trans Equality Campaign prioritized improving legal recognition, access to healthcare, and protections against discrimination for transgender people. The organization is further interested in addressing the bullying faced by transgender individuals and is concerned for their mental health. For example, its Diversity Champions Programme, where it collaborated with schools and workplaces, highlighted its determination to achieve its goals in such areas.

Sweden

Sweden was the first country to legalize trans people to change their sexual identity in 1971; it is still one of the biggest advocates for trans rights, even providing them free hormone therapy. Throughout history, it has consistently recognized transgender rights; however, it has been criticized for its latest decisions and its restrictive guidelines for minors seeking gender-affirming care. This has sparked debates on the shift in European politics and Sweden's stance. Nevertheless, Sweden continues to lead in many areas concerning transgender rights. For example, in 2018, the

government abolished a decades-old law requiring sterilization for legal gender change and offered compensation to affected individuals, setting a global precedent.

The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is the leading suicide prevention nonprofit organization for LGBTQ+ youth; they provide young people with much-needed help in times of crisis. Founded in 1998, the Trevor Project addresses mental health issues, including depression and suicidal ideation, arising due to stigma, discrimination, and lack of acceptance. It further offers chat and text services in order to show immediate support to those in need. It is an essential project that plays a crucial role in the issue since it addresses many important mental health issues that transgender individuals often suffer from.

The Transgender Law Center (TLC)

The Transgender Law Center is a major advocacy organization dedicated to the human rights of transgender people. It addresses the discrimination and violence faced by them in areas such as employment, healthcare, education, and housing. Its work is critical in preventing transgender individuals from often encountering legal and institutional barriers that hinder full societal participation. The TLC provides legal support to individuals who face such struggles.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR)

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) is possibly the most crucial party. It has the most power and is the most trusted. The HRC can implement all changes needed for transgender people to get all the necessary rights and privileges they may need. Addressing the human rights violated against transgender people is essential, and the collaboration of all member states throughout the process is required. Throughout resolutions and discussions, the UNHCR highlights the violence and discrimination faced by transgender people worldwide.

World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), being a globally recognized authority for transgender health, plays a crucial role in the issue. Established in 1979, it shapes medical and physiological care for transgender individuals while promoting the importance of evidence-based care as well as education and research. It further maintains the Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People (SOC), a comprehensive set of guidelines that provide best practices for healthcare providers. Its work is adopted by many governments and

organizations, and its efforts influence many policies. Additionally, it offers training and certification for healthcare professionals in order to ensure quality for transgender individuals.

Possible Solutions

To make sure that transgender people get proper human rights would be to implement various laws and protections for transgender people. Firstly, governments should enforce laws that legalize being transgender; this includes legalizing the trans identity, allowing people to change their legal sex, and permitting gender-affirming care (hormone therapy, surgical sex change, etc.) Secondly, governments should implement clear anti-discrimination laws for transgender people, as this is a highly sensitive topic, and the community should also be considered as such. For all these things, governments should get help from experts and NGOs to ensure that all critical bases are covered.

Member states should help by providing access to education and awareness campaigns. This means that children should have discussions on gender diversity included in their learning programs at an appropriate age. Research should be funded to understand better the challenges that transgender individuals face, and this data could be used for training and conducting lessons in the workplace.

Additionally, ensuring access to affordable, high-quality gender-affirming healthcare, including hormone therapy and surgeries, through public and private healthcare systems is essential. This would be done with the initiative of member states and the United Nations assistance in supporting such actions. Health organizations and governments would be encouraged to implement their healthcare services for transgender individuals according to globally recognized practices. This would not only ensure that transgender people are receiving high-quality care but also set a global precedent. In order to sustain this, authorities would be urged to receive an education in reliable practices, and professionals would be responsible for inspecting the progress made.

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