

Exploring the impact of Covid-19 on India's marginalised third gender – The Hijras

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Abstract

Epidemics and pandemics, like COVID-19, are not gender neutral. Much research has been done on the gendered impact of the virus and the effect that this has had on women and girls specifically. However, not much has been written on the impact of COVID-19 on gender and sexual minorities and their access to basic rights. COVID-19 has exacerbated the conditions of vulnerability that affects some of the most marginalised in society like poor health systems, pervasive poverty, structural inequalities and the absence of social protections. Therefore, the protection of vulnerable groups during a pandemic like the COVID-19 remains a strategic imperative, especially when considering the potential vulnerability it has on a wide range of marginalised communities. India's *hijra* community, being disproportionately disadvantaged, has consequently proven to be particularly vulnerable during the pandemic. However, even before the pandemic, widespread social stigmas and discrimination against this community were promoted for generations. This paper will highlight those factors that increase the vulnerability of *hijras* during the times of COVID-19. It will further explore the impact of the pandemic on India's third-gender and look at ways to identify and support this marginalized group.

Keywords: Covid-19 increases inequalities; hijras; impact of pandemic; marginalisation of minorities; pandemics and inequalities.

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