

Opportunities & Challenges for Transgender Applicants in Myanmar's Education Sector

Kyal Sinn

Abstract

While Myanmar's education sector is prioritized for national development, transgender applicants remain systematically marginalized by institutionalized gender binaries. This study investigates the specific barriers encountered by transgender individuals seeking employment within Myanmar's academic institutions, particularly in the post-2021 socio-political landscape. While previous literature has documented general LGBT exclusion during the 2011–2020 reform periods, this research addresses a critical gap by providing an in-depth analytical focus on the "professional persona" and the structural gatekeeping of the state education system.

Theoretically, the study synthesizes Minority Stress Theory with Social Exclusion Paradigms (Silver, 1994) to interpret how institutional norms function as mechanisms of professional rejection. Adopting a Transcendental Phenomenological design, the research employs semi-structured interviews with ten purposely selected participants, including both practicing educators and those who have exited the profession for informal business sectors. Data are processed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to uncover the essence of lived experiences regarding identity management and "chronic concealment."

Preliminary findings suggest that systemic barriers are rooted not only in colonial-era legal frameworks like Penal Code Section 377 but also in the cultural construct of the "Ar Thariya" which enforces strict gender performance. By moving beyond advocacy-based reporting to a rigorous phenomenological analysis, this study reveals how the formal education system acts as a primary gatekeeper of gender conformity. This research provides critical, evidence-based insights necessary for inclusive policy reformation, arguing that the exclusion of transgender educators fundamentally eliminates the quality and human rights equity of the national educational environment.