



EMPOWERING EUNUCHS THROUGH INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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Abstract

The eunuch communities of South Asia, also referred to as Hijras in India and Pakistan constitute one of the most systematically marginalized groups in the world, with a high rate of discrimination being practiced against them in the educational, employment, and social realms. This review is a broad overview of how inclusive education, together with vocational training and policy reform, can be a revolutionary tool to empower eunuchs. Based on the research conducted between 2015 and 2025, the paper summarizes the evidence that a holistic approach to the educational access, development of vocational skills, enforcement of the policy, and community involvement can help to eliminate social exclusion and increase economic opportunities to a significant degree. The core discoveries indicate that there is quite a significant difference between the legislative safeguards and reality, as the stigma, insufficient funding, and the lack of enforcement continue to deter the effectiveness of the policy. The review determines key empowerment barriers on an individual, institutional, and systemic level and suggests evidence-based interventions of the barriers. The conclusion underlines that transformative eunuch empowerment can only be achieved through institutional reform and investment of resources, cultural transformation, and real involvement of communities.

Keywords: Eunuch Communities, Marginalized Group, Hijra, Inclusive Education, Skill Development, Vocational Skills

1 Introduction

1.1 Learning Eunuch Marginalization

South Asian communities of eunuchs (also called Hijras in India and Pakistan and classified as a third gender in Bangladesh) are a historically important but long-stigmatized group of people. These people have a recorded cultural and spiritual background that goes back centuries in the South Asian societies (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2025). In spite of this historical existence, the modern day eunuchs are systematically denied basic opportunities such as good education, formal job, secure housing, and productive social involvement. Several forces intersect to cause this marginalization: colonial traditions of criminalization; post-colonial legalities that reinforce discrimination; deeply held social biases; institutional practices that perpetuate marginalization; and policy regimes that fail to uphold eunuch rights and dignity.

Educational marginalization especially limits the opportunities of eunuchs to attain the human capital required to economically participate and integrate into the society. People who claim to be eunuchs are subject to systematic discrimination in schools, where they are bullied by their peers and harassed by their administrators. The relatives are also strongly against the idea of attending school, and the stigma of society poses psychological obstacles to school attendance. All these compounding factors lead to significantly less education levels than those of cisgender populations, and carry on the cycle of poverty across generations, effectively crippling future prospects in all life areas. The educational marginalization has cascading disadvantages across the lifespan: people with limited background literacy and numeracy skills face systematic disadvantages in the labor market and productive income generation. Poor education denies people access to the formal sector jobs, and they are reduced to the precarious informal jobs with the lowest possible wages, employment insecurity, and exploitative terms. Educational exclusion is thus a systemic and endemic obstacle to intergenerational breaking of poverty and social marginalization cycles of the eunuch communities.

1.2 Method of the Review

This comprehensive review adopted a structured narrative and thematic review approach to examine the potential of inclusive education and skills training to empower eunuchs/third-gender communities. The 23 academic sources were chosen and consulted purposely and included the topics of inclusive education, gender equity, social exclusion, vocational and technical education, community empowerment, digital inclusion, social entrepreneurship, policy implementation, and lived marginalization of transgender and Hijra groups in South Asia. A thematic analysis of the chosen literature revealed the existence of several significant obstacles, such as stigma, discrimination, access to education, weak policy implementation, social-religious pressure, and economic marginalization. The review also summarized the evidence on the enabling strategies, including inclusive classrooms, TVET and skills training, community-based empowerment, digital tools, social entrepreneurship and rights-based policy support. In this way, the study created a holistic picture of the educational, social, cultural, and economic issues influencing eunuchs and offered them inclusive education and skill-building opportunities to empower and integrate them as a part of society.

2. Organizational Impediments to Empowerment

2.1 Policy Implementation Gaps

Although the legislation in India (Transgender Persons Act) and Pakistan (Constitutional protections) has provisions that purport to define the rights to education and employment, there are still significant gaps between the intent of the legislation and the real-world practices. Studies that focus on these policy frameworks show that enforcement mechanisms are still weak, institutional discrimination has not been eradicated yet, and non-inclusive infrastructure systematically discriminates against gender-diverse populations (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2025). The government and non-governmental organization skill development initiatives receive insufficient funds and are not designed to address the eunuch community's requirements. The Indian legal system of protection has not led to the corresponding changes in access to education or economic opportunities (Pathakji & Sharma, 2024). The legal status of Hijras in Bangladesh is also largely symbolic, and it does not lead to any tangible changes in terms of economic accessibility or educational accessibility (Hossain et al., 2024).

This is a gap in policy implementation that reveals more systemic failures: inadequate budgetary allocation; poor inter-agency coordination; low institutional capacity to implement culturally appropriate programming; poor accountability mechanisms; and little community engagement in program design (Dushkova and Ivlieva, 2024). These structural constraints add to personal obstacles, form strata of restraint against any real empowerment of the eunuch, even under the protection of legislation.

2.2 Economic Barriers and Social Stigma

Social and cultural forces are so very deep-rooted that they hinder eunuchs' education. The stigma and social prejudice are still prevalent in South Asian societies, and it deprives eunuchs of their humanity and rights to live. Such stigmatization is multilateral: relatives dishearten educational attendance; communal ties use exclusion against eunuchs in the community; employers discriminate against eunuchs even after the law; academic staff members are prejudiced; and classmates bully eunuch students (Thalho et al., 2025). Making these attitudinal barriers compound is the endemic poverty among the eunuch communities. Studies have always reported that the high percentage of Hijras have no stable sources of income and social protection, and are thus, financially insecure and reliant on informal employment opportunities. Such economic precariat makes educational participation impossible in many interrelated ways: families are unable to sacrifice immediate income to invest in education; households are unable to afford school fees or school supplies; individuals have no resources to support their nutritional needs, which educational participation demands; the psychological weight of

economic survival is a heavy burden on cognitive ability to learn and academic participation. Moreover, the internalized oppression due to widespread discrimination in society causes significant psychological barriers to educational participation because eunuchs feel reduced self-efficacy and incredibly low ambitions about educational and occupational opportunities (Suleman et al., 2023).

3 Empowerment Framework: Inclusive Education.

3.1 Benefits and Conceptualization

Real inclusive education goes well beyond the physical placement of marginalized students in regular schools (Vindigni, 2024). Instead, it is the provision of learning environments, learning programs, and institutional arrangements that affirm, uphold, and support diversity in learning needs and identities. In the case of eunuchs, inclusive education implies the respect and acknowledgment of gender-diverse identities; the active way of eradicating discrimination; adaptation of instructional practices; meaningful social inclusion; and developing respect for human dignity and equality (Prez-Jorge et al., 2024).

The studies on inclusive education in various settings present a strong evidence base on the advantages of inclusive education. Research into inclusive and segregated school contexts indicates that students in marginalized groups perform better in school environments that are truly inclusive (Prez-Jorge et al., 2024). Moreover, the fact that a variety of students are placed in inclusive classrooms is beneficial to all students because it helps them develop critical social skills, such as cooperation, empathy, perspective-taking, and diversity appreciation (Maker & Bahar, 2024). Learners in truly inclusive settings show increased acceptance by peers, better socialization, and readiness to incorporate peers with divergent backgrounds (Prez-Jorge et al., 2024).

More importantly, the marginalized students in inclusive schools demonstrate better self-confidence, sense of belonging, and psychological well-being than those in segregated schools (Akhlan et al., 2024). In the case of eunuchs in particular, inclusive education environments offer social integration in a variety of ways: peer relationships that support instead of deny gender diversity; teacher relationships that offer mentorship and affirmation; structured opportunities to collaborate as a community, which forms a sense of belonging; explicit anti-discrimination education; and community-building activities (Prez-Jorge et al., 2024). The social integration experiences last, and may transform the attitude of peers towards increased acceptance and decreased social exclusion outside of school.

3.2 Quality and Outcomes of Implementation

The implementation of inclusive education needs long-term institutional change that goes beyond policy declarations. A study of effective implementations shows that they share some common features: curriculum revision to allow students with various needs to access core content; universal design of learning principles; instruction in a collaborative manner; formative assessment practices; universal classrooms with a clear ban on discrimination (Ramadhan et al., 2024). The quality of implementation has a significant impact: in cases of superficial implementation of inclusive education, outcomes are also unsatisfactory (Hollings, 2021); in cases of dedicated implementation with beliefs in institutional change, high-quality professional growth, and resources, positive outcomes are always recorded in research (Maker and Bahar, 2024).

4 Vocational training and Skills Development.

4.1 TVET as Economic Empowerment Mechanism

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) frameworks are some of the key mechanisms where the marginalized groups such as eunuchs may gain tangible job-market-

relevant skills and avenues to economic self-reliance. The empowerment potential of TVET is based on the delivery of practical and immediately applicable competencies; direct labor market connections; alternative access to education by people who cannot access conventional education; and quick conversion of poverty to economic well-being (Leong, 2024). Culturally responsive and, at the same time, designed with a focus on accessibility, TVET may not only provide individuals with practical skills that employers require but also instill confidence, independence, and personal agency (Leong, 2024).

A study of the influence of TVET on marginalized populations shows that it had significant impacts on work opportunities, earnings, and the quality of life. The above benefits are not limited to the economic domain: the completion of the program leads to self-efficacy and confidence; working offers structure, purpose, and social identity; stable income makes housing, healthcare, and education accessible; and employment helps to integrate into society and prevents psychological isolation (Nurfaisah and Pertiwi, 2025). Such multidimensional advantages imply that TVET can be a transformative empowerment strategy of eunuchs.

4.2.3 Excellent Models and Evidence-Based Design

A study of the vocational education of disadvantaged groups indicates that the principles used in this context can be applied to eunuch-targeted TVET: training content should be matched to the actual needs of the labor market; training time should be long enough to develop real competency; the instructor should be a quality professional with technical skills and cultural awareness; job placement support should be provided after the training; mentors should be available to support long-term employment; and workplace discrimination needs to be addressed (Bruin et al., 2023). When these design principles are used, vocational training generates significantly superior employment results than those programs that do not have the features. The article *Facilitating Non-School-Based Technical and Vocational Training of Disadvantaged Youths in South Africa* shows that practice-based approaches can be successfully used to help trainees to learn skills and competencies to find jobs (Mayombe, 2023).

4.3 Combined Skill Development

Nevertheless, studies outline some severe constraints of TVET methods that are applied in isolation. Skill training without the background of literacy and numeracy growth leads to short-term gains (Pirzada et al., 2024). Moreover, the vocational training that focuses on technical skills only and overlooks the soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence, yields poor job preparation. The individuals can attain technical competency but fail to acquire interpersonal skills that can make them have positive working relationships and progress.

Proper empowerment programming understands that both technical and soft skills should be developed in an integrated manner. Combined with explicit training in technical skills, educational and vocational programs that incorporate the explicit training in the development of soft skills, social-emotional learning, and community engagement yield significantly better results than programs with a technical focus (Maulana, 2023). In the case of eunuchs, specific skills to be developed should be integrated, such as technical skills, which are in line with the available occupations; soft skills, which allow them to develop positive relationships at the workplace; digital literacy skills, which help them gain financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills; stress management skills, community engagement, and leadership development skills.

5 Economic Opportunities and Community-Based Approaches.

5.1 Alternative Educational Models.

Educational models created in the community with marginalized populations, in particular, have the potential to provide an effective way of avoiding obstacles to the participation of eunuchs in mainstream systems. Within the community, locally based programs that are

programmed at the request of the community and designed to establish culturally validating learning environments yield high-quality outcomes. It has been found that successful models share distinguishing characteristics, such as explicit dedication to serving the marginalized population; elimination of financial obstacles; commitment by the teacher to empowering the community; holistic support of students (including counseling and extracurricular activities); and active facilitation of higher education opportunities (Kuteesa et al., 2024).

The success factors are common in such community-based efforts: eliminating financial barriers; establishing affirming, explicitly affirming environments; hiring culturally competent teachers; offering full-scale support services; facilitating peer support; involving families and communities; and establishing concrete employment and economic opportunity pathways (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). When implemented in the context of eunuch population, these factors might offer a convenient entry point into education, build the competence base, and a platform to develop skills.

5.2 Educational Approaches that are led by peers.

Then especially to eunuch populations, educational methods that are led by their peers where older eunuchs educate, mentor and support younger members of the community have their own unique benefits. Peer-led methods exploit the current ties within the communities and informal connections and minimize stigma and provide the psychologically safe conditions on which eunuchs feel heard and acknowledged (Akintayo et al., 2024). The research reports that the participants are more engaged, have improved educational results, and more lasting behavior change when being educated by esteemed peer educators, especially when peer educators themselves belong to marginalized communities relating to the experience of the participants (Suhas et al., 2024).

Moreover, the peer-led methods develop community capacity and leadership, developing sustainable educational infrastructure. Peer educators who build training, mentoring, and facilitation skills are sustained community educational and empowerment resources with a ripple effect far beyond the first contact (Akintayo et al., 2024). In the case of eunuch communities, the peer-based educational systems may be developed based on preexisting informal knowledge systems and provide a form of formal education and skill development.

6 Economic Empowerment and Employment.

6.1 Work as the Way to Self-respect.

The correlation between education and employment is one of the critical avenues whereby the empowerment of education is converted into economic empowerment. Educational level, especially in combination with marketable skills, greatly increases the employment opportunities and the income potential (Sarfraz et al., 2021). To the marginalized groups such as the eunuchs, education helps them to move between informal and formal sector jobs, usually with increased wages, more stability, improved working conditions, and improved long-term paths.

6.2 Barriers to Employment and Novel Solutions.

Nevertheless, eunuchs have significant and systemic obstacles to formal sector employment regardless of their qualifications and skills. Studies report that there is prevalent discrimination, limited job opportunities, wage disparity, harassment in the workplace, and barriers to promotions (Thalho et al., 2025). These obstacles are indicative of overt discrimination as well as institutional elements such as discrimination of hiring, occupational credentialing necessity that limits access, hostile workplace atmospherics, and systematically denied advancement opportunities (Thalho et al., 2025).

Identification of the barriers to employment has led to new methods of widening the economic frontiers. Digital job sites are the prospective solutions, as they provide opportunities to match the eunuchs with the employers who need certain services, and might also minimize the

discrimination in face-to-face interactions. The studies, which investigate the Hijra community, report that adapted platforms aimed to provide an opportunity to work in the fields of domestic service and caregiving can increase access to formal employment without jeopardizing dignity and safety (Hossain et al., 2024). These platforms also have employment data, ease of employer contacts, and processes that may minimize discrimination.

In addition to formal jobs, entrepreneurship and microenterprise development are also important economic opportunities to eunuchs who are discriminated against in the labor market. Microeconomic policies such as entrepreneurship education, mentoring and access to microfinance can largely enhance the income-generation and economic stability of marginalized groups. In the case of eunuchs, entrepreneurship has its unique rewards, namely, independence and avoidance of discriminatory working environments; meaningful work that allows them to express their own values; a chance to contribute to society and to lead it; and the extension of their already existing informal economic competencies (Nurfaisah & Pertiwi, 2025).

7 Complex Systemic Strategies.

7.1 Multi-Level Integration

Although educational and skill-building interventions at the level of individuals are rather valuable opportunities, the studies prove that individual interventions create little or no empowerment when the systemic barriers are not addressed. Evidence studying vocational training programs shows that even high-quality individual skills training often does not translate into sustainable jobs when an overall economic opportunity is limited, discrimination is present, and social support networks are nonexistent (Bruin et al., 2023). The phenomenon of empowerment is multidimensional and involves coordinating changes at the individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels at the same time (Kuteesa et al., 2024).

Studies on behavioral change theory demonstrate that the individual level change which is not supported by the environment and system, is rarely maintained. Skills can be acquired by training individuals, and unless these are conducive working conditions, continuous mentoring, and economic systems that allow employment, the skills are likely to remain unapplied. Educational participation can help people gain confidence, and in the absence of discrimination barriers and opportunity structures, increasing confidence can cause disappointment when faced with systematic exclusion (Suleman et al., 2023).

7.2 Holistic Socioecological Framework.

1. Eunuch empowerment efforts should be conducted in ways that cover all the barriers at various interconnected levels at the same time (Dushkova and Ivlieva, 2024). Based on socioecological models, thorough solutions need to be provided to:
2. Personal Level: Skills training, confidence building, psychological support, and self-efficacy development (Vindigni, 2024).
3. Interpersonal Level: Supportive interaction with mentors, peer support groups, and family involvement (Dushkova and Ivlieva, 2024).
4. Organizational Level: Non-discriminatory, equity, and active inclusion policies and practices; resource distribution that facilitates quality services; and institutional cultures that appreciate diversity (Ayhan et al., 2020).
5. Community Level: The change of community attitudes toward more acceptance; collective action and advocacy; the development of community institutions and social capital (Dushkova and Ivlieva, 2024).
6. Policy Level: The development of legal safeguards; the implementation of anti-discrimination policies; the distribution of government funds; and the establishment of accountability (Vindigni, 2024).

7.3 Policy Recommendations

Research evidence synthesis produces important policy recommendations:

Policy Implementation: The laws that are currently in place to prevent discrimination should be implemented in good faith by sound measures of complaint, substantial sanctions, frequent monitoring, and institutional responsibility. Unless implemented, laws offer mere formal safeguards (Pathakji & Sharma, 2024; Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2025).

Teacher Development: Teachers need to continue practicing gender-sensitive pedagogy, acquire specific knowledge about eunuch identities, and be given practical methods of establishing affirmative environments. Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs should be covered in professional development (Ayhan et al., 2020). Schools and colleges should also have policies that clearly state that discrimination is forbidden and set up meaningful penalties for such actions (Hollings, 2021).

Resource Allocation: Both Government and NGO funding should be significantly increased to levels that are currently low to facilitate universal access to education, skill training, and job placement. The funding should focus on the quality of the programs and cultural suitability (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2025).

Multi-Sector Coordination: There is a need to coordinate the government education agencies, vocational training providers, employers, civil society organizations, and eunuch communities (Djatkiko et al., 2025).

8 Conclusion

The eunuch communities in South Asia still continue to stand out as one of the most marginalized groups in the world, having been discriminated in the education, employment, social participation, and health systems. This all-inclusive overview, however, goes to show that inclusive education, when paralleled with skill building, economic access, community transformation, and systemic policy transformation, can be empowering transformational pathways. Observations in other settings demonstrate that in instances where they are provided with access to education, eunuchs cultivate the potential to engage in productive economic activities, become socially assimilated, and contribute to the community. The existing barriers are not natural but institutional- the results of discriminatory policies, institutional practices, and cultural attitudes, which can be altered by taking specific collective action.

Transformative eunuch empowerment can only be achieved through multilayered strategies that deal with individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels at the same time. There should be educational policies that put emphasis on inclusive schooling where the eunuchs get access to quality education in affirmative environments. The vocational training systems need to be restructured to accommodate the eunuch populations using specific programming, culturally competent training, and job connection services. The economic policy should enable eunuch entrepreneurship and formal sector employment by providing access to microfinance, enforcing anti-discrimination, and supporting market linkages. Social policy has to work against discrimination with the use of legal protection, institutional responsibility, and social awareness. In all these endeavours, eunuch communities should be seen as key decision-makers whose perspectives as far as themselves and priorities are concerned should be used to inform every intervention.

The experience shows that eunuchs can receive inclusive education, be able to develop their skills, get access to economic opportunities, and integrate into society if the corresponding institutional adjustments are made and societies invest the required resources into it. By making eunuch empowerment, by implementing broad educational and economic strategies, the South Asian societies will be able to meet constitutional promises of equality, empower the human potential of hundreds of thousands of marginalized people, improve economies by increasing

productive power, and move towards truly inclusive societies, where all people, irrespective of gender identity, can work with decency and invest their talents in the common good.

The fact that eunuch communities were transformed to be not only one of the most marginalized in the world, but also full-fledged members of society is not only a moral necessity, but also an economic and social one. Investment in human capital, social cohesion, and economic development is investment in inclusive education, skill development, and economic empowerment. This is the moment to act with transformative action, based on evidence-based strategies that tackle systemic obstacles and also take note of and leverage the strengths, resilience, and capabilities inherent in the eunuch communities themselves. It is only in the light of such extensive, systemic, and community-based solutions that South Asian societies can achieve the potential of all their members and create truly inclusive and equal societies in the current and future generations.

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