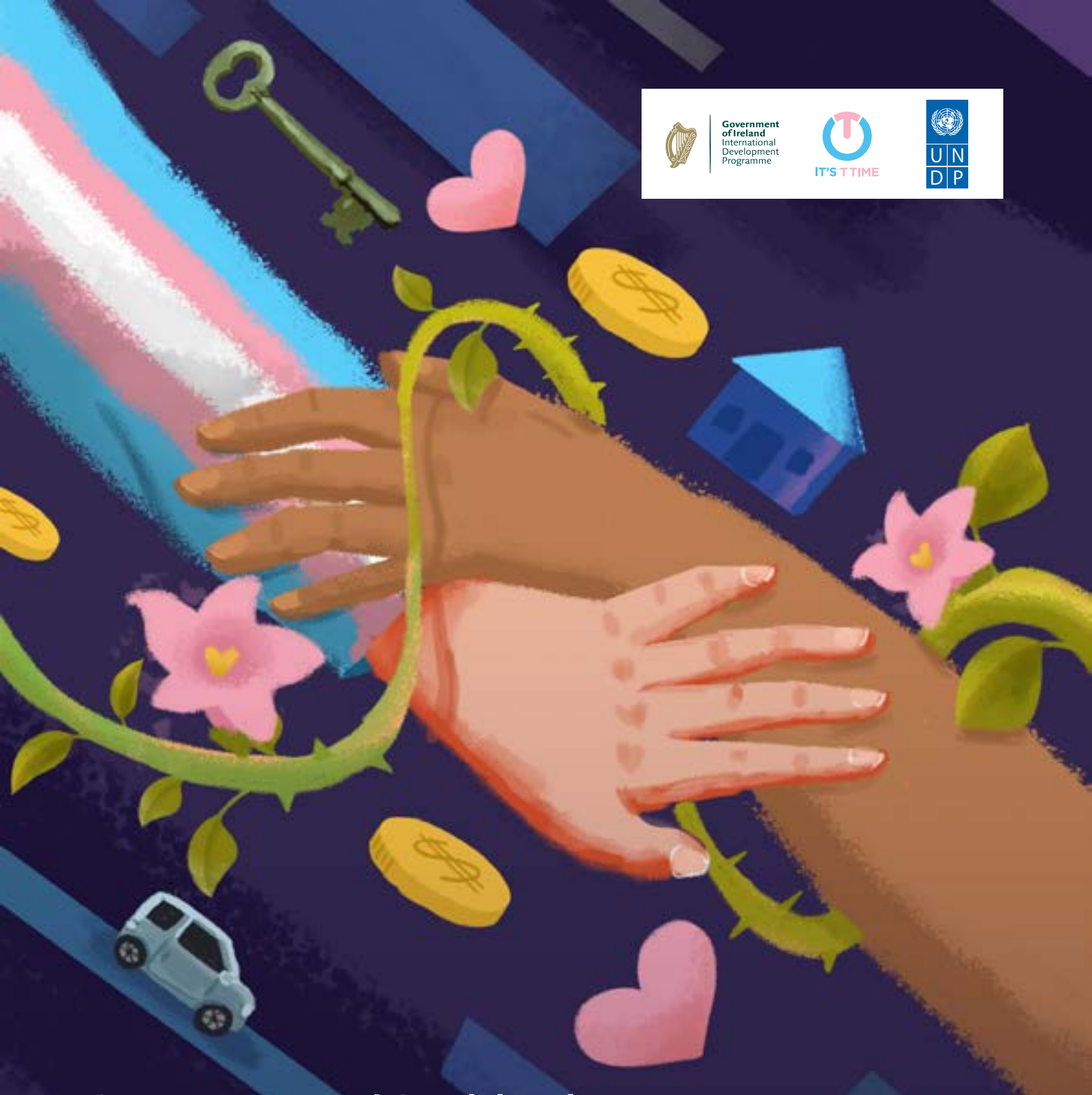


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A Series of Policy Discussion Papers

ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC WELLBEING DIMENSION OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN VIET NAM

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Governance and Participation
A Series of Policy Discussion Papers

ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC WELLBEING DIMENSION OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN VIET NAM

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INTRODUCTION

The research, "Assessment of the Economic Wellbeing Dimension of Transgender People in Viet Nam" was conducted with funding from the Embassy of Ireland through the PAPI research program of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam. This is a significant study aimed at providing in-depth insights into issues related to the economic wellbeing of the transgender community in Viet Nam—a population group facing unique challenges in accessing employment opportunities, education, and social services.

As a transgender community-based organization and a member of the LGBTI Inclusion Index working group, IT'S T TIME has continuously strived to advance the rights of transgender people in Viet Nam. Through collaboration with independent researchers, we aim to carry out this study to assess the economic wellbeing of transgender individuals in Viet Nam and to propose policy recommendations that foster a fairer and more equitable labor environment. Amid Viet Nam's growing efforts to protect the rights of vulnerable groups, this research seeks to shed light on essential issues for transgender people regarding income, employment opportunities, and access to public services. Despite increasing public attention to the transgender community, social and workplace stigma and discrimination remain key barriers to their social inclusion and sustainable development.

Through this study, we hope to provide essential data and information for government agencies, social organizations, and businesses to develop policy solutions aimed at improving the economic wellbeing of transgender individuals. At the same time, we seek to promote a more equal and just society for all. With the support of UNDP in Viet Nam and the contributions of experienced researchers, this study reflects our organization's commitment to ensure that no one is left behind and contributes to the achievement of the sustainable development goals in Viet Nam.

The research team would like to extend our sincere thanks to the transgender individuals, employers, transgender community organizations, and allies who participated and contributed to the completion of this study. We also express our gratitude to those who accompanied us in implementing this research and helped bring it to life, including:

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On behalf of the research team,

MPP Nguyen Quoc Anh

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

FtM	Female-to-Male transgender people
FtM	Male-to-Female transgender people
SOGIESC	Abbreviation for 4 concepts related to gender and sexuality: Sexual Orientation; Gender Identity; Gender Expression; Sex Characteristics
PFLAG	Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (used as a general term encompassing the broader LGBTI community)
#	Hashtag used to replace sensitive or hateful words

TERMINOLOGY

No.	Term	Definition
1	Gender Identity	The self-perception of one's own gender, from within the subconscious, that one belongs to a particular gender. Gender identity is not based on biological sex but depends on each person's perception and self-identification.
2	Gender Expression	The ways a person chooses to express their gender identity through behavior, tone of voice, way of speaking, pronouns, clothing style, hair, makeup, etc.
3	Sexual Orientation	Emotional and/or sexual attraction to one or more genders.
4	Transgender People	An umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not align with what is typically expected for the sex they were assigned at birth. Their self-identification often carries local, social, cultural, religious, and spiritual characteristics.
5	Transsexual People	Transgender people who desire medical interventions to affirm their gender identity.
6	Gender Dysphoria	A state of distress or discomfort that may occur when a person's gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth. Not all transgender and gender diverse people experience gender dysphoria.
7	Gender Affirming Care	Includes any medical procedures aimed at increasing the congruence between a person's gender identity and their body. Medical procedures may include hormone therapy and gender affirming surgery: chest reconstruction surgery, genital reconstruction surgery, facial feminization surgery, other procedures.
8	Intersex People	People born with sex characteristics (including external genitalia, internal reproductive organs, sex chromosomes) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.
9	Economic Wellbeing of Transgender People	The level of security regarding living conditions, income, and career development opportunities that transgender people attain through participation in the labor market and access to social security policies. This concept includes factors such as stable employment, sufficient salary to meet basic needs, the right to fair treatment in the workplace, the ability to accumulate wealth, and access to support services such as healthcare, insurance, and vocational training.

No.	Term	Definition
10	Stigma - Discrimination	Any distinction, exclusion, or preference based on race, color, national origin or social origin, ethnicity, sex, age, pregnancy status, marital status, religion, belief, political opinion, disability, family responsibilities, or on the basis of HIV infection status or for reasons of establishing, joining and participating in trade unions, workers' organizations at enterprises that have the effect of affecting equality of opportunity in employment or occupation.[1] In this study, the forms of stigma and discrimination mentioned include: being refused employment, being required to dress according to the gender recorded on documents, not having their gender identity recognized, being misnamed or misgendered, unfair work assignment, etc.
11	Violence/Violent Acts	Based on the prohibitions in the Labor Code 2019, the group of violent acts includes: - Maltreatment, beating of workers. - Forcing workers to do things against their will. - Sexual harassment in the workplace. - Labor exploitation - Illegal use of underage workers. - This study adds verbal violence.
12	Employer	An enterprise, agency, organization, cooperative, household, or individual that hires or employs workers under an agreement; in case the employer is an individual, they must have full civil act capacity.[2]
13	Employee	A person who works for an employer under an agreement, is paid wages, and is subject to the management, administration, and supervision of the employer. [3]
14	Migrant	Migration is the movement of population from one country to reside in another country, from one administrative unit to reside in another administrative unit.[4]
15	Diversity	Diversity includes all the differences and similarities among members of an organization in terms of self-identification such as age, gender, sex, personality, values, culture, beliefs, religion, circumstances, occupation, qualifications, experience, as well as roles within the organization.
16	Inclusion	Inclusion/Integration is the feeling of belonging, connection, and becoming an integral part of the organization.
17	Informal Labor	Informal labor is understood as labor with precarious and unstable employment, low income, no labor contract or having one but without mandatory social insurance contributions, and not receiving allowances and other social welfare benefits. [5]

1 Clause 3, Article 8 Labor Code 2019
2 Clause 3, Article 2 Labor Code 2019
3 Clause 3, Article 1 Labor Code 2019
4 Clause 3, Article 7, Population Ordinance of 2003
5 General Statistics Office of Viet Nam

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The research, *"Assessment of the Economic Wellbeing dimension of transgender people in Viet Nam"* was conducted by a research team from IT'S T TIME organization and two experts, Dr. Hoang Tu Anh (MD, PhD) and Vu Thanh Long (MSc, PhD Candidate), with funding from the Embassy of Ireland through the PAPI research program of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam. This study serves as a crucial initiative in providing in-depth insights into issues related to the economic wellbeing of the transgender community in Viet Nam, a demographic group facing specific challenges in assessing employment opportunities, education and social services.

The research aims to explore the economic wellbeing of transgender individuals by analyzing the relationship between income, livelihood demands and labor experiences. These factors directly impact the work motivation, overall health, and career prospects of transgender people. Based on these findings, the study proposes recommendations to organizations in public and private sectors to enhance social welfare, promote gender equality and inclusive development for vulnerable groups.

2. Research objectives

• Measure levels of income, fulfillment of livelihood needs, experiences of discrimination, stigma, and violence encountered by transgender people in the labor market, along with the impact of these experiences on the economic wellbeing.

• Identify coping strategies and support-seeking behaviors done by transgenders individuals in job searching and employment.

• Analyze good practices from employers in promoting diversity and inclusion.

• Propose recommendations to improve the economic wellbeing of transgender people and foster a fair and inclusive workplace.

3. Research participants and scope

a. Participants: Transgender individuals and employers

• **Quantitative method: 412 survey samples.**

Among these, 226 individuals self-identified as transgender men (accounting for 54.9%; 41.2% had not undergone medical transition, 58.8% had), and 186 identified as transgender women (accounting for 45.1%; 39.8% had not undergone medical transition, 60.2% had).

The majority reside in urban areas (83.7%), with many living in Hanoi (35.9%) and Ho Chi Minh City (28.2%). Additionally, 44.7% of respondents are migrants.

Regarding the level of gender identity disclosure, results show that 32.8% of the total sample were fully open about their gender identity, with MtF individuals (36%) having a higher rate than FtM individuals (30.1%).

74% of the sample had changed their style of dress and appearance, with this rate being higher among

FtM individuals (82.3%) compared to MtF individuals (64%). 71.8% of the total sample had changed their gender expression, with 77.4% of FtM individuals compared to 65.1% of MtF individuals.

• **In-depth interview:** 21 transgender individuals participated in in-depth interviews, including 12 transgender women and 9 transgender men. Moreover, 9 in-depth interviews were conducted with employers, comprising representatives from multinational corporations, domestic enterprises, private companies and individual business owners.

• **Group discussion:** 7 group discussions were held, each comprising 3-5 participants, totaling 27 individuals (including 17 transgender women and 10 transgender men).

b. Scope:

Time frame: from October to December 2024

Locations: Hanoi City, Ho Chi Minh City, An Giang province, and Hai Phong City.

4. Key Findings

4.1. Employment status, income, and welfare access

The research indicates that transgender individuals in Viet Nam face numerous barriers in accessing employment and social welfare benefits. The proportion of transgender people engaged in income-generating work stands at 82.3%, lower than the national average (97.9%). The average income of transgender people is higher than the per capita income for both formal and informal labor groups. However, a majority work in informal sectors or freelance positions, resulting in only 51.1% of respondents having social insurance coverage.

Transgender men (FtM) are more likely to be employed full-time and tend to have higher average incomes compared to transgender women (MtF). Factors such as educational attainment, residential status, and employment contracts are positively correlated with income levels and welfare access. In contrast, transgender women, migrants, individuals with an educational level below college/university, or those working without formal employment contracts often experience greater difficulties in securing social security benefits.

For informal workers, those with formal employment contracts earn significantly higher incomes (10,172,105 VND) compared to those without (7,967,500 VND). Notably, among employees with formal contracts, FtM individuals earn an average of 11,223,214 VND (N=112), while MtF individuals earn 8,662,821 VND (N=78).

4.2. Correlation between income, welfare and livelihood demands

The majority of transgender people's current income primarily covers basic living expenses such as food, transportation and accommodation. Investing in career development or undergoing gender-affirming medical procedures often exceeds their financial capacity. Additionally, specific needs such as hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgery remain uncovered by health insurance. The costs associated with services range from tens to hundreds of millions of VND, posing a substantial financial burden for many transgender individuals

> *"The first issue is that the cost is too high; advanced training classes cost around eight to over ten million dong per subject, per technique, while there are so many techniques and trends..."*
> - Tram, a 30-year-old transgender woman, migrant.

4.3. Stigma, discrimination, violence and consequences on aspects of economic wellbeing

The study indicates that transgender people in Viet Nam frequently face stigma, discrimination, and violence behaviors, both during job search and in the workplace environment. 26.3% of transgender participants reported being denied employment solely due to their transgender identity. Furthermore, 29.6% of transgender individuals were required to change their appearance, clothing, or gender expression to conform to employer expectations.

In the workplace environment, transgender employees may encounter mentally violent behaviors or harassment, including being judged by their appearances and demeanor, being called by the gender on their identification documents and not having their gender identity recognized. In the past 12 months, 56.1% of transgender individuals experienced verbal abuse, with a higher rate among MtF (59.2%) compared to FtM (52.5%).

Some people reported being denied access to restrooms that align with their gender identity or being forced to conceal their personal identity. These behaviors often go unaddressed due to the lack of safe and effective internal reporting and complaint mechanisms within businesses.

> *"At that time, I already knew I was a transgender man and I had changed my appearance, so I didn't use the women's restroom; I used the men's restroom. Some colleagues who knew me and treated me well, so when we saw each other in the restroom, they would say things like, 'Oh, this guy is using the restroom today', they sounded very cheerful. Some people who didn't like it would say directly 'Why the #### is this pédé in here', they would curse directly, or they would say unpleasant things, like ' You're a #### woman, why are you in the men's restroom.'"*
> - Dat, a 31-year-old transgender man, migrant.

In addition, levels of gender identity disclosure may affect the experience of violence in the workplace. Transgender people who are open about their gender identity tend to face more violence than those who are not.

The impact of these experiences extends beyond psychological harm and directly affects the economic wellbeing **53.9%** of people who experienced stigma, discrimination, or violence suffered from prolonged stress, declining self-esteem, and diminished work motivation. Many suffered insomnia, chronic headaches, depression, and in severe cases, withdrawal from the labor market or social isolation.

4.4. Factors influencing economic wellbeing and workplace experiences of transgender individuals

The economic wellbeing of transgender individuals is shaped by multiple intersecting factors.

Firstly, the primary factor is the lack of comprehensive legal protection for diverse SOGIESC. Viet Nam currently has no national laws or regulations explicitly protecting LGBTI individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in the workplace. The Gender Affirmation Law has yet to be passed, creating significant barriers for transgender individuals in recruitment and employment, especially when their gender markers on legal documents do not align with their physical appearance, increasing the risk of stigma and exclusion.

Secondly, in many Vietnamese businesses, policies specific to transgender employees have not yet been prioritized or institutionalized, instead relying mainly on the willingness and awareness of leadership.

Feedback and complaint mechanisms lack safety and effectiveness, while gender-based prejudices persist without being adequately addressed, leading to reluctance among transgender employees to speak out about workplace issues.

Conversely, positive factors, such as accessible education, formal employment contract, open-minded work environment, and support from family, friends, and colleagues have been proven to contribute optimistically to job stability and socio-economic welfare improvement among transgender individuals.

4.5. Role and limitations of community groups

Currently, transgender community serves as an emotional support space and fosters shared stories and solidarity, thereby contributing to a sense of belonging and validation. However, the research also indicates that supportive activities related to careers, job information, and protection of labor rights within the community are still quite limited.

5. Recommendations

5.1. Recommendations for the Government

Recommendation 01: Speeding up the adoption of the Gender Affirmation Law to ensure the right to change civil status and protect transgender individuals comprehensively

Recommendation 02: Incorporate the terms "gender identity" and "sexual orientation" into legal frameworks to establish a foundation for developing and enforcing labor protection policies of transgender individuals

Recommendation 03: Develop and expand financial assistance policies for gender-affirming healthcare services

Recommendation 04: Improve the legal framework and policy development for psychological counseling and mental healthcare services tailored to the needs of transgender individuals and the LGBTI community

5.2. Recommendations for employers

Recommendation 05: Encourage businesses, organizations and institutions to integrate gender and sexuality diversity and inclusive practices into human resources training and internal policies

Recommendation 06: Establish and implement anonymous and confidential reporting mechanisms that are gender-sensitive, prioritizing the rights and safety of affected individuals while integrating community network support

Recommendation 07: Establish specialized welfare policies, such as supplementary health insurance, financial aid programs, flexible leave policies to assist gender-affirming healthcare for transgender employees

Recommendation 08: Establish and develop psychological support and counseling programs for workers, especially transgender individuals

5.3. Recommendations for community-based organizations and groups

Recommendation 09: Develop employment platforms that are friendly to transgender individuals and the LGBTI community

Recommendation 10: Establish career counseling and skills development programs for transgender individuals

Recommendation 11: Enhance primary psychological support capabilities and build referral systems for mental health care services within the transgender community

I. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.1. Background

Transgender people are among the vulnerable populations and, at the same time, a hidden community within society, due to a lack of comprehensive legal and policy recognition and protection. Existing studies have indicated that societal prejudices often lead to transgender individuals being dismissed, refused employment, or facing difficulties in career advancement due to their gender identity[6]. These disadvantages have been mostly inadequately addressed due to a lack of policy-oriented research data, particularly data that could reflect the socio-economic situation of transgender people. The fact that many countries have not conducted studies to estimate the transgender population also contributes to the specific needs of this group not fully recognized in policies and services.

Transgender people in Viet Nam face similar experiences. A study by the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE) with 2,363 participants showed that stigma based on SOGIESC occurs in families, schools, workplaces, the healthcare system, housing, and public spaces. Among the four groups surveyed—lesbians, gay men, bisexual individuals, and transgender persons—transgender respondents reported the highest levels of gender-based stigma experienced within the past 12 months [7] [8].

An online study in Viet Nam revealed that 85% of transgender women surveyed had dropped out of school due to bullying and violence[9]. This significantly impacts the employment opportunities of transgender people, who frequently face unemployment or underemployment. Many transgender women choose performing at funerals as their primary occupation, as this work allows them to express their female identity[10].

The amended Civil Code of 2015 for the first time recognized the right to gender reassignment, laying the legal groundwork for transgender people to change their personal identity documents. The drafting process of the relevant clause involved state agencies such as the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, and other ministries and sectors. However, in the absense of specific legal guidance, this right has not been fully realized, creating barriers in accessing employment and essential services. Transgender people who have not undergone surgery or have not been able to adjust their documents face difficulties when applying for jobs, leading to the risk of discrimination, harassment, which negatively impacts their mental health and quality of life.

Meanwhile, the amended Labor Code of 2012 added a provision prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex (Article 8). However, the legal definition of sex remains narrowly confined to a binary understanding—male and female—without reference to gender identity or sexual orientation, thereby inadequately protect transgender people. Furthermore, there is still a lack of research assessing the impact of legal gender recognition on the lives and livelihoods of transgender people in Viet Nam.

6 Human Rights Campaign. (2021, June 30). Transgender and nonbinary people FAQ. http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/transgender-faq.

7 49.4% for transgender men and 48.5% for transgender women, although these figures should be interpreted with cautionas transgender women account for only 1.4% of survey participants

8 Luong The Huy và Pham Quynh Phuong (2015). Is it because I am LGBT?: Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Viet Nam. Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE).

9 Hoang, T. A., & Nguyen, V. T. (2013). Online survey on stigma, discrimination and violence against homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in schools, CCIHP.

10 Pham, Q. P., Le, B. Q., & Mai, T. T. (2012). Aspiration to be myself: Transgender people in Viet Nam: realities and legal aspects. Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE).

For the transgender community, the enactment of the Gender Affirmation Law has been underway nearly 10 years, even as the need to change personal information (such as name and gender) and the demand for healthcare are increasingly growing. After six years of being drafted by the Ministry of Health, the draft was transferred to National Assembly Deputy Nguyen Anh Tri in May 2023. Two months later, the National Assembly agreed to include the Gender Affirmation Law in the 2024 Law and Ordinance Development Program, with expectations that the draft would be discussed at the National Assembly in October 2024 and considered for approval in May 2025. However, in September 2024, the draft on Gender Affirmation Law was removed from the agenda of the October 2024 National Assembly session and is currently being supplemented and having its documentation completed.

At the international level, Viet Nam noted the recommendations within the framework of the 2019 UPR regarding the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the Labor Code. However, the Vietnamese government accepted recommendations related to the development of an Anti-Discrimination Law and the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups such as homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people[11].

To monitor the level of inclusion of the LGBTI community in social and policy areas, the LGBTI Inclusion Index was developed as a comprehensive assessment tool, reflecting the living conditions, access to opportunities, and rights of LGBTI groups in each country. The set of indicators measures five strategic areas, including (1) Education, (2) Participation in political and civic life, (3) Economic wellbeing, (4) Health, and (5) Personal safety.

In Viet Nam, this index was piloted for the first time in 2022[12], with the Economic Wellbeing aspect measured through three indicators: (1) Non-discrimination laws in employment, (2) Law enforcement, and (3) Equal benefits. The results showed that the first indicator scored 0.167 points, reflecting the absence of national or local laws or regulations that explicitly protect LGBTI people from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). For intersex people, although there is a decree prohibiting discrimination against those who have undergone "gender reassignment surgery," its scope of application is very limited. The remaining two indicators were not scored due to the lack of a specialized agency to handle allegations of SOGIESC-related discrimination in employment, and because the social welfare system currently only recognizes benefits for heterosexual couples, excluding same-sex relationships.

Against the backdrop outlined above, conducting in-depth research on the economic wellbeing of transgender people is essential to provide a reliable data foundation for policy planning and indices that reflect the inclusion of the transgender community, and the LGBTI community in general. This approach will not only clarify the vulnerability and financial resilience of transgender individuals but also help identify bottlenecks in accessing resources, thereby proposing solutions to improve their quality of life, promote gender equality, and foster inclusive development in Viet Nam.

1.2. Literature Review

According to a report by the World Health Organization, the LGBTI community accounts for 3% to 7% of the world's population, with transgender individuals (those who have undergone surgery or use hormones)

11 Decision No. 1975/QD-TTg, dated December 31, 2019, approving the Master Plan for the Implementation of Recommendations Accepted by Viet Nam under the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Human Rights by the United Nations Human Rights Council

12 Referencing the results of the pilot phase at: https://www.undp.org/vi/vietnam/publications/bo-chi-so-hoa-nhap-lgbti-tom-tat-giai-doan-thi-diem

making up 0.3% to 0.5% of the population[13]. Using the lower average of 0.3%, Viet Nam is estimated to have nearly 300,000 transgender people (as of October 14, 2024, the Vietnamese population was 99,672,882), while using the higher average of 0.5% suggests a figure of around 500,000 transgender individuals in Viet Nam.

Recent research on the economic wellbeing of gender and sexual minorities has emphasized the importance of understanding the experiences of transgender people, particularly in developing countries[14]. Economic wellbeing is a significant area of concern, directly linked to broader issues of gender-based discrimination, social stigma, and legal recognition[15]. In Viet Nam, despite considerable achievements in social movements and progress in the rights of LGBTI people in general and transgender people in particular, the transgender community still faces significant barriers that hinder their economic opportunities and quality of life[16].

Existing literature indicates that transgender people in the United States and other developed countries often face higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and financial instability compared to the cisgender people[17]. This research also points to factors contributing to this disparity, including workplace discrimination, lack of access to education and vocational training, as well as disproportionate involvement in precarious forms of work such as sex work. Similarly, studies from India and Cambodia have found that transgender people in these countries also experience high levels of poverty, unemployment, and economic marginalization.[18] [19]

The economic wellbeing of transgender people is shaped by several interconnected factors. Among these, employment discrimination remains a critical issue, as many transgender individuals encounter bias during the hiring process and in the workplace. Furthermore, legal framework regarding gender identity also plays a significant role in shaping the economic landscape for transgender people, especially in contexts where legal protections are limited. Moreover, access to education and healthcare directly impacts economic outcomes, as educational attainment is linked to better employment opportunities[20].

In Viet Nam, research has also indicated some aspects of economic wellbeing. For example, a 2018 report on gender identity discrimination in employment highlighted the systemic barriers faced by transgender people in the labor market, illustrating how bias in recruitment can lead to unemployment and economic insecurity[21]. Hoang and Nguyen (2013)[15] documented the stigma and violence faced by transgender individuals, pointed to a direct link between social acceptance and economic opportunities[22].

The literature consistently emphasizes the crucial role of employment discrimination in affecting the economic wellbeing of transgender people. A 2018 audit of employment discrimination based on gender identity in Asia revealed that many employers are unwilling to hire transgender candidates due to social prejudice, leading to high unemployment rates within this community. Luong and Pham (2015) support

13 World Health Organization. (n.d.). Transgender health and human rights.
14 Lee, B. et al. (2019). Economic wellbeing of LGBTQ+ communities in developing countries
15 Hill, M., & King, E. (1995). Women's education and economic wellbeing: The case for developing countries
16 Winter, S. et al. (2018). Transgender people in Asia: A review of the literature.
17 Lee, B. et al. (2019). Economic wellbeing of LGBTQ+ communities in developing countries
18 Raghuram, G. et al. (2023). Transgender exclusion in India: Socio-economic challenges and policy responses.
19 Chhim, S. et al. (2017). Lived experiences of transgender people in Cambodia: Barriers and opportunities.
20 Shannon, M. (2021). The Labour Market Outcomes of Transgender Individuals. Labour Economics, 77, 102006. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2021.102006
21 Winter, S., Davis-McCabe, C., Russell, C., Wilde, D., Chu, T.H., Suparak, P. and Wong, J. (2018). Denied Work: An audit of employment discrimination on the basis of gender identity in Asia. Bangkok: Asia Pacific Transgender Network and United Nations Development Programme.
22 Hoang, T. A., & Nguyen, V. T. (2013). Online survey on stigma, discrimination and violence against homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in schools, CCIHP.

this view, arguing that the fear of discrimination forces many transgender individuals to conceal their identity, further limiting their job opportunities[23].

On the other hand, the pervasive stigma surrounding transgender identity significantly impacts access to education. Hoang and Nguyen (2013)[15] illustrated how societal stigma negatively affects the likelihood of participating in educational and training activities, consequently impacting transgender individuals' competitiveness in the labor market. Research by Pham et al. (2012)[16] further highlights that limited access to quality education and healthcare services hinders economic opportunities for transgender people. Those with lower educational attainment or health disparities are less likely to secure stable employment, thus perpetuating their disadvantages. Evidently, economic wellbeing is directly proportional to broader social acceptance, which can significantly strengthen or weaken the prospects of transgender individuals.

Mental health is another pivotal factor influencing the economic wellbeing of transgender people. Thi et al. (2024) [24] explored the lived experiences of transgender individuals in addressing mental health challenges in Viet Nam, finding that social isolation significantly impacts their mental health. Poor mental health can affect an individual's ability to seek and maintain employment, thereby contributing to cycles of poverty and social marginalization. Additionally, Do and Nguyen (2020)[25] emphasized the importance of healthcare providers' preparedness to address the health needs of transgender people. Inadequate access to suitable healthcare services can exacerbate mental health issues, further complicating the economic situation of transgender individuals already facing discrimination in various areas of life.

Finally, legal bottlenecks exacerbate the challenges faced by transgender people. While the 2015 Civil Code allows for gender re-determination, comprehensive anti-discrimination protections are still lacking. This absence of legal safeguards leaves employers free to discriminate without robust recourse, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion.

Thus, the issue of economic wellbeing for transgender people is a multifaceted and complex one, intersecting with numerous smaller issues. Hoang and Nguyen (2013)[26] noted that transgender individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face compounded challenges, including fewer job opportunities and limited access to support resources, further marginalizing them in the economic sphere. This intersectional perspective highlights the importance of considering the multiple factors that contribute to the economic wellbeing of transgender people.

All the aforementioned points underscore the challenges that transgender people in Viet Nam face regarding their economic wellbeing. Employment discrimination, social stigma, and legal inadequacies create a complex environment that undermines the economic stability of this community. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach, including strengthening legal protections, raising awareness, and developing comprehensive workplace policies.

To sum up, while some initial studies in Viet Nam have touched upon the economic issues of transgender people, there remains a notable lack of in-depth and up-to-date surveys on specific factors such as

23 Luong The Huy và Pham Quynh Phuong (2015). Is it because I am LGBT?: Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Viet Nam. Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment.
24 Thi, L., Nguyen, L., Le, A., Giang Quoc Nguyen, & Loi Chi Cu. (2024). Exploring the lived experiences of transgender people in navigating mental health challenges in Viet Nam. Journal of Clinical Social Work. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-024-00941-2
25 Do, T. T., & Nguyen, A. T. V. (2020). 'They know better than we doctors do": providers preparedness for transgender healthcare in Viet Nam, Health Sociology Review, 29(1), 92–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2020.1715814
26 Hoang, T. A., & Nguyen, V. T. (2013). Online survey on stigma, discrimination and violence against homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in schools, CCIHP.

current employment status, income levels, access to social insurance, and their presence in various occupations. There is also a shortage of qualitative research exploring the personal experiences and perceptions of transgender individuals in accessing and maintaining employment, particularly in the context of facing stigma and discrimination. This research is conducted to partially fill those gaps, contributing further documentation on the economic experiences of transgender people in Viet Nam today, thereby shedding more light on the links between social, legal, and economic factors that affect their lives.

1.3. Research Objectives

- Measure the levels of stigma, discrimination, and violence experienced by transgender people in their participation in the labor market, along with the impact of these experiences on their economic wellbeing.

- Identify the coping strategies and help-seeking behaviors that transgender people employ in response to experiences of stigma, discrimination, and violence during their job search and in the workplace.

- Analyze the good practices of employers related to the implementation of diverse and inclusive policies and practices.

- Propose recommendations aimed at enhancing the economic wellbeing of transgender people and developing better practices for employers.

1.4. Research subjects and participants

1.4.1. Research subject

The object of this research is the economic wellbeing of transgender people in Viet Nam. This includes a focus on their access to employment, workplace environment, income, and their overall welfare in Viet Nam.

1.4.2. Research participants

This research is conducted with two groups of research subjects: Transgender individuals and employers.

1.5. Research scope

- **Time period:** October - December 2024

- **Qualitative Research Locations:** 4 provinces/cities (Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, An Giang, Hai Phong).

The selection of 04 provinces and cities for the research was determined based on the research team's practical work with local transgender community groups. Specifically, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City – two classified special urban areas – are hubs for many active transgender organizations and community groups; they both have a visible presence of transgender individuals in social activities. Additionally, in An Giang province and Hai Phong city, transgender communities have also formed active groups, showing community presence in localities outside the two major urban centers. The selection of these research sites aims to ensure geographical diversity and varied social contexts, while also facilitating the research team's access to transgender groups in different regions across the country.

1.6. Research methodology

This research employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Quantitative research is conducted through an online survey, deployed on the KOBO platform.

The qualitative research method involves in-depth interviews and focus group discussions - which are semi-structured. Transgender individuals of different ages, criteria, and geographical locations are selected to gather diverse experiences in accessing employment and the workplace, along with their income and welfare. Simultaneously, the research conducts in-depth interviews with employers to explore their practices in ensuring diversity and inclusion in the workplace environment.

1.6.1. Online survey method

Due to the dispersed and relatively closed nature of the transgender community in Viet Nam, accessing a large-scale research sample poses significant limitations. However, the characteristics of online group activities and the tendency to seek information within the community have facilitated online surveys. The research team chose an online survey method combined with purposive and quota sampling to reach four target groups: (1) transgender men who have undergone medical interventions, (2) transgender men who have not undergone medical interventions, (3) transgender women who have undergone medical interventions, and (4) transgender women who have not undergone medical interventions. Medical interventions include hormone therapy, chest surgery, and genital surgery.

Regarding the quantitative sample size, through online channels (fan pages, forums, and community groups) as shown in the table below, the estimated total number of members in the target groups is approximately 403,000 people. With a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size for the online survey is 384 samples. The study distributed the survey to community groups for LGBTI individuals and transgender individuals, with the following statistics:

Page	Estimated total members
Fanpages, Community Groups, and Forums of Transgender people	
FTM Việt Nam (Close group)	7.400
FTM Organization Fanpage	25.000
Mạng lưới người chuyển giới Việt Nam - VNTG (Viet Nam Transgender Network)	20.000
FTM - Transguys - Chuyển giới nam (FTM - Transguys - Transgender Male)	9.000
IT'S T TIME Fanpage	11.000
Trans Girl VN	10.407
Trans Guys VN	16.796
Cộng đồng LGBT An Giang (An Giang LGBT Community)	5.900
Cộng đồng LGBT Hải Phòng (Hai Phong LGBT Community)	8.500
Gót Hồng Sơn La (Son La Pink Heels)	1.900

Fanpages of Development Organizations with Projects or Programs related to Transgender people or the LGBTI Community in general	
iSEE Institute	130.000
Hanoi Pride	49.000
ICS Center	71.000
Asexual in Vietnam	37.000

The research received 541 responses between October 27, 2024, and November 24, 2024. Through the data processing stage, the research team removed records with contradictory content and records with a significant amount of missing information. The final result was 412 fully completed and consistent responses, including 226 individuals who self-identified as transgender men (accounting for 54.9%, of which 41.2% had not undergone medical interventions and 58.8% had undergone medical interventions) and 186 individuals who self-identified as transgender women (accounting for 45.1%, of which 39.8% had not undergone medical interventions and 60.2% had undergone medical interventions). The data processing utilized SPSS and R software and employed descriptive statistics, tests of differences between groups, tests of association, and correlation analysis.

The characteristics of the collected sample, with a young average age and high urban representation, reflect the online sampling method used, which is more accessible to younger individuals and urban residents, especially in major cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The majority live in urban areas (83.7%), with a significant number residing in Hanoi (35.9%) and Ho Chi Minh City (28.2%). Additionally, 44.7% of the sample are migrants.

Table 1.1: Demographic characteristics of the online survey sample (Unit: %)

Characteristic	FtM (N=226)		MtF (N=186)		Average (N=412)	
	%	Sample size	%	Sample size	%	Sample size
Average age	25.59		25.08		25.36	
Age group						
16-24	49.1%	111	59.7%	111	53.9%	222
25-44	50.0%	113	38.7%	72	44.9%	185
45 and above	0.9%	2	1.6%	3	1.2%	5
Legal gender on official documents						
Male	15.0%	34	90.3%	168	49.0%	202
Female	85.0%	192	9.7%	18	51.0%	210
Rural/urban						
Urban	83.6%	189	83.9%	156	83.7%	345
Suburban, town/city	11.9%	27	10.2%	19	11.2%	46
Rural	4.4%	10	5.9%	11	5.1%	21

Migration status						
Non-migrant		115	60.8%	113	55.3%	228
Migrant (over 5 years)	29.6%	67	23.1%	43	26.7%	110
Migrant (under 5 years)	19.5%	44	16.1%	30	18.0%	74
Education level						
Did not complete primary, no schooling		0	2.2%	4	1.0%	4
Primary school	0.4%	1	2.7%	5	1.5%	6
Lower secondary school	2.2%	5	3.8%	7	2.9%	12
Upper secondary school	19.9%	45	31.2%	58	25.0%	103
Vocational training, vocational school		14	6.5%	12	6.3%	26
College. University	63.7%	144	46.8%	87	56.1%	231
Postgraduate		17	7.0%	13	7.3%	30
Disability status						
No disability	93.4%	226	92.5%	186	93.0%	412
Have disability		15	7.5%	14	7.0%	29

1.6.2. In-depth interview method

For transgender individuals participating in in-depth interviews, they were categorized based on specific criteria: Under 40 years old with a university degree or higher; Under 40 years old with an education level below university; Migrants (from other provinces, from small villages); People with disabilities; People who do not use social media.

The total number of transgender individuals participating in in-depth interviews was 21 people, covering all the criteria, including 12 transgender women and 9 transgender men. Transgender individuals who participated were recruited through a registration link for in-depth interviews specifically for the research.

Table 1.2: The characteristics of the qualitative in-depth interview sample

No.	Gender identity	Age	Medical Intervention	Education level	Occupation	Notes
1	Male	27	Yes	University	Teacher	
2	Male	22	No	University	Legal assistant	
3	Female	27	Yes	University	Teacher	
4	Female	27	Yes	University	Reporter	
5	Male	27	Yes	12th grade	Tattoo artist	
6	Female	21	No	12th grade	Freelance (fortune teller)	
7	Female	26	Yes	12th grade	Social worker	
8	Female	31	Yes	College	IT staff	
9	Male	29	Yes	9th grade	Freelance (shaman)	

10	Male	27	Yes	Master's Degree	Office staff	Migrant
11	Male	30	Yes	12th grade	Unemployed	Migrant
12	Female	30	Yes	12th grade	Nail technician	Migrant
13	Female	21	No	University	Teacher	Migrant
14	Male	31	Yes	University	Freelance business	Person with disability
15	Male	29	Yes	University	Design staff	Person with disability
16	Male	24	Yes	University	Office staff	Person with disability
17	Female	24	No	University	Teacher	Person with disability
18	Female	36	Yes	7th grade	Lô tô singer	Does not use social media
19	Female	38	Yes	11th grade	Seamstress	Does not use social media
20	Female	61	No	8th grade	Lô tô singer	Does not use social media
21	Female	31	No	12th grade	Lô tô singer	Does not use social media

During the outreach process, the research team conducted 09 in-depth interviews with employer. Specifically, they reached representatives from a multinational corporation, a domestic corporation, private companies, and self-employed individuals. The research team sought employer participants through referrals of business representatives; additionally, the team proactively contacted and approached various types of employers to ensure diversity for the research.

1.6.3. Focus group discussion method

The study conducted 07 focus group discussions, each with 3-5 participants, there are 27 participants in total (including 17 transgender women, 10 transgender men).

The selection of focus group participants was based on 3 criteria: transgender individuals under 40 years old with a university degree or higher; transgender individuals under 40 years old with an education level below university; and transgender migrants (from other provinces, from small villages). In addition to these criteria, the focus groups were also balanced between transgender men and transgender women to explore specific experiences and compare intersecting gender-related factors.

During the fieldwork in An Giang, the research team conducted one additional focus group compared to the initial plan (6 focus groups) with transgender individuals over 40 years old with an education level below university. Transgender individuals over 40 are considered a very difficult group to reach, and there is limited information available about their situation. Due to this, the team decided to conduct an additional interview to gather more of their experiences.

1.7. Limitations of the research

1.7.1. Time

The research was conducted from October 2024 to December 2024.

Due to the relatively short implementation period, the scope of this research primarily focused on understanding the average income level, the correlation between income and basic needs as well as demographic characteristics, and the experiences of stigma, discrimination, and violence faced by transgender people during their job search and employment, along with the factors influencing this process.

In addition, some important aspects of economic wellbeing have not yet been analyzed in depth. Specifically, the research did not delve into assessing the long-term accumulation and investment capacity of transgender people; the extent to which they benefit from social security policies such as health insurance and unemployment insurance; their economic resilience after shocks or natural disasters; as well as the link between economic wellbeing within family relationships. Furthermore, although residential characteristics were analyzed, the research did not clarify the differences in economic opportunities and levels of social security between transgender people living in urban areas, rural areas, and remote or border regions.

1.7.2. Number of participants

There are two objective reasons as observed by the research team for the lower-than-expected number of participants. The first one is a decline in motivation to participate in research and surveys due to the delayed information regarding the draft on Gender Affirmation Law announced in September 2024. The second reason is due to the fact that the research took place at the end of the year, coinciding with the activities of many projects and personal work, resulting in difficulties for the participants in online access and participation.

During the online survey implementation, there were some errors with the KOBO software that prevented participants from submitting their answers after completion. Although solutions were promptly shared with the participants, this posed a barrier to the process.

Regarding the number of employers to be interviewed, there were also fewer participants than planned (9 out of 15 samples). There were difficulties in reaching out to representatives of businesses and corporations, as many of those who were referred felt they did not adequately represent their organization to participate in the research. Others stated that they had never had transgender employees and therefore declined to participate.

1.7.3. Diversity of participants

Although the research made efforts to diversify the participants based on criteria such as disability status, migration status, and include older individuals, there were limitations. The number of participants with diverse disabilities and/ or with migrant backgrounds were not sufficient. As such, the analyses with these groups in the report could provide initial findings, yet, specific conclusions cannot yet be drawn.

1.8. Research ethics

The research ethics is approved by the Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) on October 25, 2024.

All information of the participants is kept confidential in accordance with state regulations and to ensure the safety of participants.

Participation of individuals was entirely voluntary in both the quantitative survey and the qualitative interviews and was confirmed by the research's consent form.

In this report, names of the participants were changed to ensure their anonymity.

II. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Employment status, income, welfare, and the extent of needs fulfillment among transgender people in Viet Nam

2.1.1. Employment status, income, and welfare of transgender people in Viet Nam

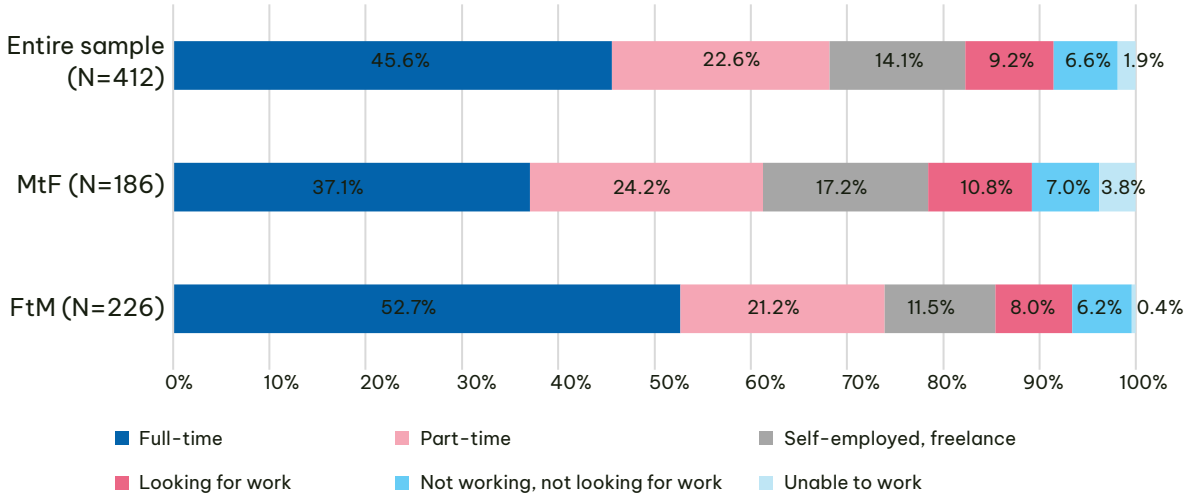
a. Current employment status

Regarding current employment status, 82.3% of the research sample (339 individuals) reported currently having income-generating work. This rate is lower than the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam's 2023 report, which stated that the labor force aged 15 and over in Viet Nam reached 52.4 million people, of whom 51.3 million were employed, equivalent to an employment rate of approximately 97.9% [27].

According to the chart, 45.6% of the research samples are in full-time paid employment. This rate is notably higher in the FtM group (52.7%, N=119) compared to the MtF group (37.1%, N=69), although due to the small sample size, this difference is not statistically significant. It is worth noting that 22.6% are in part-time paid employment, 14.1% are self-employed or freelancers, and 9.2% are seeking employment. A small proportion, 6.6%, are not working and not seeking work, while 1.9% are unable to work.

Within the group with income-generating work, the majority (68%) hold only one job, with this rate being 70.5% for FtM individuals and 64.9% for MtF individuals. Approximately 26.7% hold two jobs, and 5.3% hold three or more jobs.

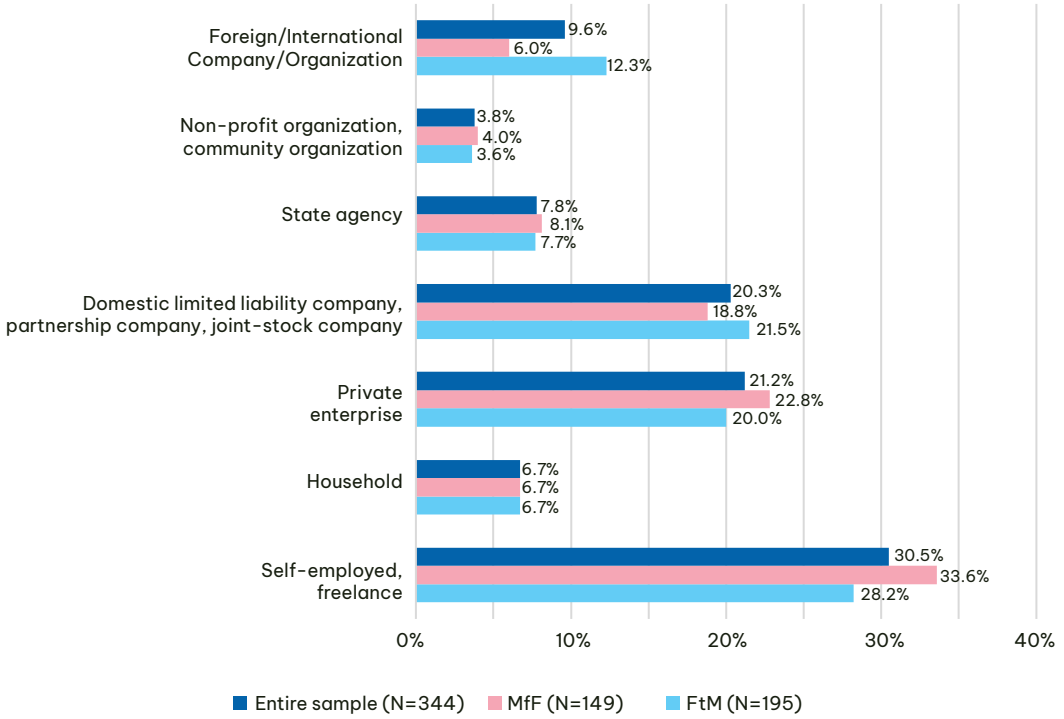
Chart 2.1: Job allocation by time in correlation with gender identity (Unit: %)



Regarding the type of work, 30.5% of the research sample reported being self-employed or freelancers, with this rate being 28.2% for the FtM group and 33.6% for the MtF group. A significant number of participants work in private enterprises (21.2%), limited liability companies, partnerships, or domestic joint-stock companies (20.3%). A smaller number work in state agencies (7.8%), non-profit or community organizations (3.8%), and foreign or international companies or organizations (9.6%).

27 Viet Nam's labor market situation in 2023. (2023). General Statistics Office of Viet Nam.. https://www.gso.gov.vn/du-lieu-va-so-lieu-thong-ke/2024/01/tinh-hinh-thi-truong-lao-dong-viet-nam-nam-2023

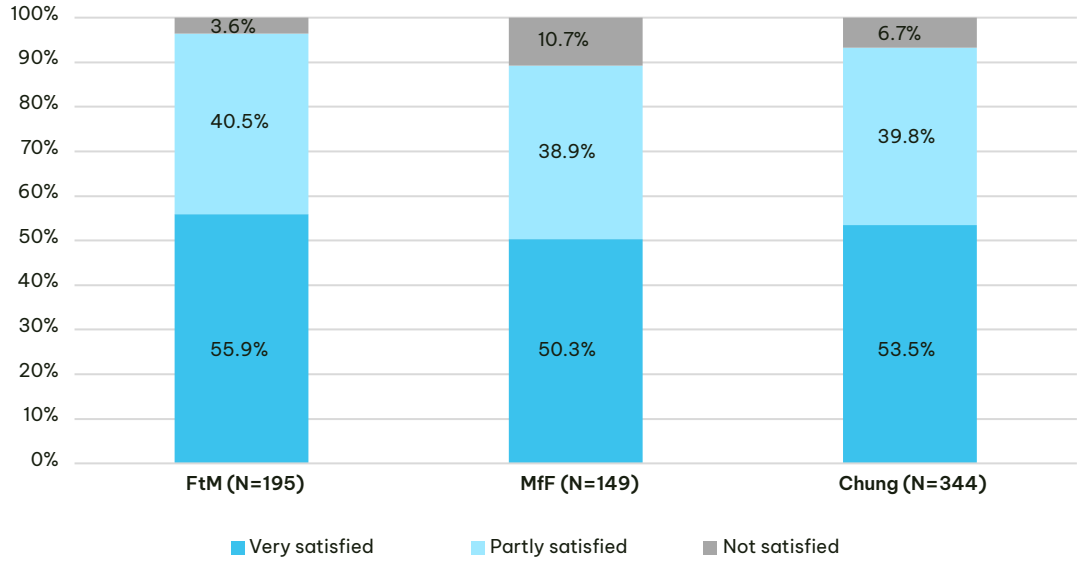
Chart 2.2: Job allocation by employer type in correlation with gender identity (Unit: %)



A significant number of participants (39.8%) are somewhat satisfied with their current job, with FtM accounting for 40.5% and MtF for 38.9%. However, 6.7% of the total sample are not satisfied with their current job, including 3.6% of FtM and 10.7% of MtF. The FtM group has a significantly higher rate of being satisfied and somewhat satisfied with their current job compared to the MtF group.

Reasons for dissatisfaction with current occupation included: first and most notably is the low salary, with 61.3% of the total sample dissatisfied with their salary. The rate is almost equal between FtM (61.6%) and MtF (60.8%). The second reason is that the occupation does not align with personal interests (30.6%), with MtF accounting for 39.2% and FtM for 23.3%. Other reasons included benefits (30.6%), work environment (28.7%), facilities (20%), the occupation not matching their abilities (13.8%), and other reasons such as stress and high-pressure (8.8%).

Chart 2.3: Comparison of satisfaction levels with current occupation by gender identity (Unit: %)



b. Income

The analysis of average income was conducted after removing outliers (6 cases reporting income over 80 million VND/month). The analysis was performed on 327 currently employed individuals with income (values within +/- 3 times the MEAN).

The FtM group had an average income of 10,074,863 VND (N=183), higher than the MtF group with 8,345,833 VND (N=144). This was also evident across different age groups. In the 16-24 age group, the average income for FtM was 7,714,943 VND (N=87), compared to 6,977,500 VND for MtF (N=80). In the 25-44 age group, the disparity was more pronounced, with 12,236,842 VND for FtM (N=95) and 10,058,065 VND for MtF (N=62). Compared to the national average per capita income in 2023, the transgender sample had a comparable or slightly higher income level than the average of 7.1 million VND/month. The average income for male workers was 8.1 million VND/month, for female workers 6,0 million VND/month; the average income of workers in urban areas was 8.7 million VND/month, and in rural areas 6.2 million VND/month[28].

Table 2.1: Income comparison between migrant and non-migrant groups in correlation with transgender identity (Unit: VND)

Classification	Groups	Average income (VND)	Sample (N)	Median income (VND)
Non-migrant	FtM	10,433,673	98	8,014,098
	MtF	8,661,111	90	6,758,377
	Total	9,585,106	188	7,472,745
Migrant	FtM	9,661,176	85	6,841,472
	MtF	7,820,370	54	8,009,414
	Total	8,946,043	139	7,344,309
Overall	FtM	10,074,863	183	7,482,119
	MtF	8,345,833	144	7,236,745
	Total	9,313,456	327	7,413,849

Regarding migration status, the non-migrant group had a higher average income of 9,585,106 VND compared to the migrant group at 8,946,043 VND. The average income for non-migrant FtM was 10,433,673 VND (N=98) and for migrant FtM was 9,661,176 VND (N=85), compared to 8,661,111 VND (N=90) and 7,820,370 VND (N=54) for non-migrant and migrant MtF, respectively. These findings were also consistent when considering disability status, the number of income-generating jobs, workplace benefits, and labor contracts.

When considering educational level, income was directly proportional to the educational level of the transgender sample; the higher the educational level, the higher the average income. The group with a college/university degree or higher had an average income of 10,668,966 VND, the high school/vocational school/intermediate level group had 7,193,043 VND, and the lower education level group had 5,833,333 VND. FtM individuals had a higher average income at all educational levels, including college, university, and postgraduate, with 10,765,354 VND (N=127) compared to 10,507,895 VND for MtF individuals (N=76).

28 Báo cáo của Tổng cục Thống kê năm 2023

Table 2.2: Income comparison by educational level in correlation with transgender identity (Unit: VND)

Classification	Groups	Average income (VND)	Sample (N)	Median income (VND)
College, University and Postgraduate	FtM	10,765,354	127	8,337,917
	MtF	10,507,895	76	9,089,008
	Total	10,668,966	203	8,605,356
Secondary, Vocational, High School	FtM	8,536,364	55	4,770,525
	MtF	5,961,667	60	2,899,158
	Total	7,193,043	115	4,098,625
Lower education level	FtM	7,000,000	1	.
	MtF	5,687,500	8	2,520,452
	Total	5,833,333	9	2,397,916
Overall	FtM	10,074,863	183	7,482,119
	MtF	8,345,833	144	7,236,745
	Total	9,313,456	327	7,413,849

The research team observed a direct correlation between income and not only educational level but also other demographic characteristics such as migration status, with the average income of 9,585,106 VND for non-migrants and 8,946,043 VND for migrants, and disability status, with the average income of 9,130,000 VND for those with disabilities and 9,325,407 VND for those without disabilities. Despite the observed differences, the small sample size meant that these differences were not statistically significant.

For informal labor, the group with a labor contract had a significantly higher average income (10,172,105 VND) compared to the group without a contract (7,967,500 VND). Notably, within the group with labor contracts, FtM individuals had an average income of 11,223,214 VND (N=112) compared to 8,662,821 VND for MtF individuals (N=78).

At the same time, the average income of the research sample in the informal sector may be higher than the ILO's reported figure (4.4 million VND, year 2021) [29]. One of the reasons is that the majority of the transgender participants in the sample reside in urban areas and major cities, have a high level of education, have internet access, and therefore do not fully reflect the experiences of transgender people in rural areas with lower education levels and limited access to technology.

29 https://consosukien.vn/dac-diem-cua-lao-dong-co-viec-lam-phi-chinh-thuc-tai-viet-nam.htm

Table 2.3: Income comparison between formal and informal workers in correlation with gender identity (Unit: VND)

Phân loại	Các nhóm	Bình quân thu nhập	Mẫu (N)	Trung vị
Without contract	FtM	8,158,730	63	5,382,787
	MtF	7,756,140	57	8,104,276
	Total	7,967,500	120	6,785,615
With contract	FtM	11,223,214	112	8,229,534
	MtF	8,662,821	78	6,641,567
	Total	10,172,105	190	7,703,302
Total	FtM	10,120,000	175	7,463,536
	MtF	8,280,000	135	7,279,913
	Total	9,318,710	310	7,428,666

The research team noted an income disparity between informal workers who received workplace benefits (with an average income of 9,500,000 VND) and those who did not receive any benefits (with an average income of 7,938,889 VND). Although this difference was not statistically significant, it reflects an important reality about the difficulties faced by informal workers. Not receiving labor benefits not only leads to lower income but also increases the economic burden, contributing to their socioeconomic difficulties.

Table 2.4: Income comparison between workers who receive and do not receive benefits in the informal workplace, in correlation with gender identity (Unit: VND)

Classification	Gender identity	Mean	Sample	Std. Deviation
Receive benefits in the workplace	FtM	10,179,245	159	7,597,768
	MtF	8,560,870	115	7,787,492
	Total	9,500,000	274	7,705,438
Not receive any benefit in the workplace	FtM	9,531,250	16	6,141,305
	MtF	6,665,000	20	2,583,811
	Total	7,938,889	36	4,677,012
Total	FtM	10,120,000	175	7,463,536
	MtF	8,280,000	135	7,279,913
	Total	9,318,710	310	7,428,666

c. Welfare and Workplace Environment

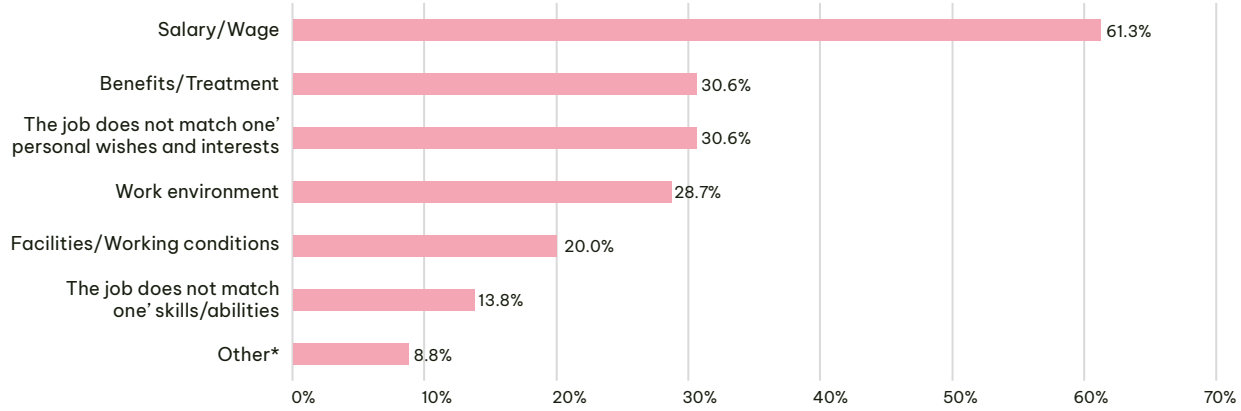
Regarding labor contracts, 60.6% of the employed sample reported having a labor contract or being on probation. This rate was higher for FtM individuals (63.1%) compared to MtF individuals (57.2%).

51.1% of employed individuals reported having social insurance contributions, with FtM accounting for 57.8%, significantly higher than the 42.0% for the MtF group.

Other benefits included: Regular health check-ups: 36.9% of the employed sample, with 40.1% for FtM and 32.6% for MtF. Statutory holidays and leave: 66.5% of the employed sample, 69.0% for FtM and

63.0% for MtF. Maternity leave: 17.2% of the sample, with 22.5% for FtM and 10.1% for MtF. Retirement benefits: 20.0% of the sample, with 23.0% for FtM and 15.9% for MtF.

Chart 2.4: Reasons for dissatisfaction with current occupation (Unit: %)



Additionally, 4.9% of employed individuals reported receiving other benefits such as flexible working hours and locations, bonuses, or travel. Notably, 11.4% did not receive any benefits, with this rate being 9.1% for FtM and 14.5% for MtF.

Through the analysis and findings on the income and welfare of transgender people, although the average income of transgender individuals may be higher than the average per capita income for both formal and informal workers, there are still many inadequacies in the labor benefits they receive. Besides general benefits, transgender individuals also have essential needs such as gender-affirming healthcare; they also face the risk of experiencing stigma, discrimination, and violence in the workplace.

From this perspective, the research team noted some findings on the extent to which needs are met through the qualitative data collection process, summarized in the section below.

2.1.2. The extent to needs fulfillment among transgender people

a. Needs for developing capacity, job skills, and relationships

One of the challenges frequently faced by many transgender individuals is that their income is only sufficient to cover basic living expenses, leaving little or no capacity to invest in skills development.. This finding was observed in transgender individuals with a high school education and transgender migrants. It is not uncommon that they desire to improve their professional skills, yet encounter obstacles due to high tuition costs.

> *"The first factor is that the cost is too high. Taking an advanced class now costs around eight to fifteen million VND for one subject, for one skill, while there are so many skills and so many trends..."* - - Tram, transgender woman, 30 years old, migrant.

The research also observed that the need to develop social relationships is constrained by income that only meets basic living needs for food, transportation, basic healthcare, and housing. At the same time, in order to save for future capacity-improvement plans, they have to cut back on participating in social activities. This not only limits their ability to build friendships and professional relationships but may also reduce their opportunities for career development and enhancing social skills, as they cannot attend social events, learn from the community, or expand their network.

> *"At first, I had to go to school, which meant I had no money left to hang out [...] Of course I had money to buy food, but not enough to socialize, as my income was completely cut off and I had to pay for the medical cost..."* – Binh, transgender man, 29 years old, high school graduate.

b. Needs for gender-affirming care

For transgender people, besides general needs like other groups, they have specific needs related to gender-affirming care. For those who seek such interventions, the associated costs represent a significant financial burden that must be carefully weighed and balanced within their limited income.. In Viet Nam, the expense of a gender reassignment surgery ranges from 23 million VND to 1,592,500,000 VND. For transgender men, the average cost for surgery is over 147 million VND, and for the transgender women group, the average cost is over 128 million VND. Considering different levels such as hormone use, chest surgery, and genital surgery, the costs can vary. They also depend on the specific medication and suitable method for each individual.

> *"At first, [the cost] was a lot. Actually, back then when I had just graduated and started working, my salary was around five to six million VND, so spending one million VND a month on hormones was quite a lot... I got an injection once a week, and each injection cost around one hundred fifty to two hundred thousand VND."* - Kien, transgender woman, 31 years old, college graduate.

> *"... Back then, when I had the surgery, I borrowed money with interest. I planned to borrow from relatives, but after thinking about it, I didn't do it and borrowed from outside instead. I did not want to bother them. Actually, my relatives were very willing to lend me money, but I didn't want to."* - Binh, transgender man, 29 years old, high school graduate.

For participants who had undergone gender-affirming interventions, it is particularly difficult for them to balance their income for the process. To do the surgeries, transgender people have to save money for a long time to pay for the large expense at once. If they experienced significant gender dysphoria, they even had to "borrow with interest" from outside sources to partially meet their needs, partly out of concern for "bothering" relatives, stemming from the desire not to burden family because gender-affirming care is a personal need.

2.2. Stigma, discrimination, and violence in employment and their impacts on the economic wellbeing of transgender people in Viet Nam

2.2.1. Experiences of stigma, discrimination, and violence faced by transgender people in job seeking and at the workplace

a. Experiences of stigma and discrimination based on gender stereotypes

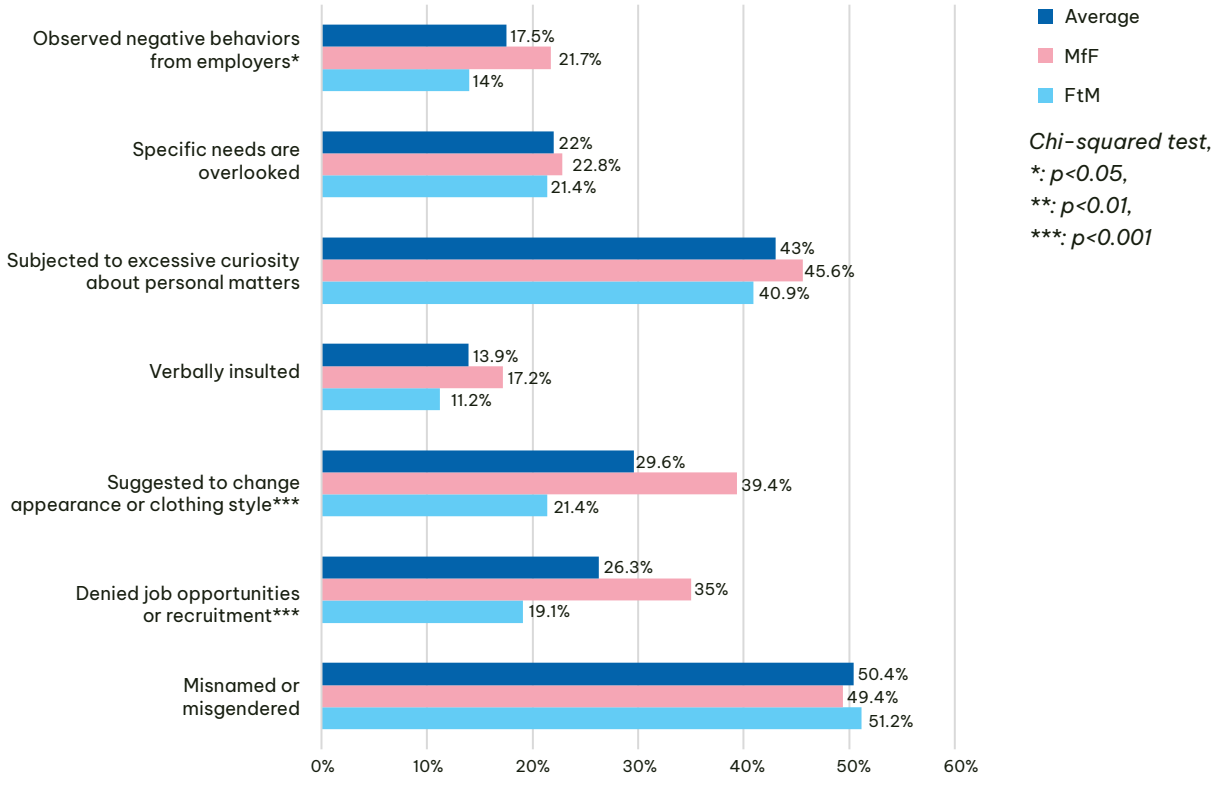
In the past 24 months, 50.4% of the group who had sought employment reported being misgendered or called by the wrong name/pronoun, with almost equal rates between FtM (51.2%) and MtF (49.4%).

A particularly noteworthy figure is that 26.3% of the total sample had been refused a job or recruitment because they were transgender, with MtF individuals experiencing this significantly more (35.0%) than FtM individuals (19.1%), a difference that is statistically significant. Similarly, 29.6% of the total sample had been suggested to change their appearance or the way they dress, with this rate higher for MtF individuals (39.4%) compared to FtM individuals (21.4%).

Furthermore, 13.9% of the total sample had been verbally insulted, with MtF accounting for 17.2% and FtM for 11.2%. Excessive curiosity about personal matters was also a significant issue, affecting 43.0% of the total sample, with a higher rate for MtF individuals (45.6%) compared to FtM individuals (40.9%).

Not having their specific needs met also affected 22.0% of the total sample, with MtF accounting for 22.8% and FtM for 21.4%. Lastly, 17.5% of the total sample had heard or witnessed negative behaviors from the recruitment team or company hiring staff, with a higher rate for MtF individuals (21.7%) compared to FtM individuals (14.0%).

Chart 2.5: Situations experienced by transgender people in job recruitment in the past 24 months (Unit: %)



Overall, the MtF group experienced significantly more negative experiences during job seeking and access to employment compared to the FtM group, specifically being refused, being suggested to change the way they dress or change their appearance, and other negative behaviors from recruiters.

In addition, there exists the idea that transgender people are "not as capable" as cisgender people. From a socio-psychological perspective, this reflects stereotypes and prejudices, as well as the confirmation bias effect when employers equate an individual's ability based on their limited experiences with transgender individuals.

> *"I mean, other people, they wouldn't even read the application, they would just interview and then hire. But at that time, I knew there would be an issue, so I immediately said that my sex assigned at birth is female, and I wanted to ask if I could wear the male uniform, as I felt rather uncomfortable wearing the female uniform. The recruiters then stopped immediately, they replied that they would have to ask for the opinion of the superiors and the manager. According to her, with my legal documents, I should wear the uniform according to the regulations... They didn't directly say they wouldn't accept me because I'm transgender. They still gave me a way out: if I changed, they would hire me. It's different in that sense. The choice was in my hands; I was given a choice, not just simply rejected..."* - Tai, transgender man, 31 years old, person with disability.

This example highlights two points: the person proactively shares his request to wear a uniform that matches his gender identity; and his expectation that the employer/ recruiter would listen to and respect that need. Through the interview process, we saw that when a transgender individual explicitly communicates about their gender identity, this often stems from their experiences of rejection, when their gender on the official documents does not match their gender expression. Some participants felt that discussing it from the beginning would save time and help them to quickly determine whether the workplace would suit them. The fact that the company needed to seek approval from higher management indicates a limited level of exposure and understanding of transgender people. Also, suggesting that the transgender candidate should wear a uniform that matches the gender on the documents, even when the suggestion is presented as a choice, shows an insufficient understanding of gender diversity and a lack of respect for the transgender applicant's gender identity.

Not every transgender individual could have such an open discussion with their recruiters. Following is a case that illustrates another way of rejection that the recruiters employ. While not directly mention the employee being transgender, the rejection still makes the applicant feel that the issue stems from their gender identity. Consequently, they lose their motivation to participate in recruitment, and this factor directly affects their income and economic wellbeing.

> *"I saw their job posting and applied for an interview, but as soon as I arrived, they said they had enough people already and told me to go home and they would get back to me. When I got home, they said they weren't hiring anymore. But about half an hour later, I saw them reposting the job ad. That was the first time I really felt the stigma and discrimination because of my appearance. After that, I didn't apply for any other job."* - Tram, transgender woman, 30 years old, migrant.

From a perspective of Community Psychology, an individual is vulnerable when experiencing overt stigma (being rejected immediately upon seeing their appearance). Due to a lack of support system or timely psychological support, the individual loses their motivation to apply for a job, indicating a lack of resilience.

The research team believes that presenting transgender individuals with only two constrained options when facing employment opportunities places them in an extremely difficult position.. They have to either change their gender expression to get a job or be themselves but lose the job opportunity. This situation of having to choose between two things that they are not supposed to do also heightens their self-doubt. This experience, when happens repetitively, could make transgender people conform to gender stereotypes to be able to work in their desired fields.

In addition, the unwanted curiosity of the recruiters about the applicants' gender identity was observed in some cases. This curiosity expressed through questions unrelated to the recruitment process or the job, and was considered lacking "respect" by the applicants.

- Transgender individuals are isolated in the workplace and compensated incommensurate with their abilities

> *"...when there are important meetings that I should have been involved in, they don't let me in. When the boss asks me something, I often have no idea. They would assume that I could handle things alright, but the thing was that I am not informed throughout the process..."* - Kien, transgender woman, 31 years old, college graduate.

In this context, the person is excluded from important meetings, which indicates a subtle discriminatory mechanism in the workplace. Not including the person who is responsible for the tasks to meetings means to exclude them from the decision-making process. This undermines their role and indirectly denies their value and contributions, especially in the case of transgender women.

This behavior stems from prejudices about the competence or suitability of transgender people in leadership or management roles. This increases the disconnection between the transgender individual and the workplace, leading to feelings of isolation and unfairness, reducing their motivation as well as professional development opportunities.

> *"I feel lonely and isolated here, without anyone to support me... I worked for three months and felt that the salary was lower than what I can bring with my skills. Most of my colleagues, including the team leader, live near the company and the neighborhood, while I'm from a different commune. I have to travel 9 kilometers to work, so it is 18 kilometers to travel back and forth. I feel like there exists some kind of bias towards those who live near the village. I have skills and am a responsible person - but my salary is always lower."* - Ninh, transgender woman, 26 years old, vocational school graduate.

Isolation combined with unequal pay is a manifestation of prejudice and favoritism that can impact both social and economic aspects. The unfairness in salary exacerbates the feeling of isolation. Despite having skills and responsibility in her work, the participant in the above case was still paid less than her colleagues, an inequality maintained by the team leader's bias. Although the reason is not directly stated as gender identity-based discrimination, the participant experienced discrimination in another form. This not only denies the value of her labor but is also an indirect way of reinforcing isolation, as she has no opportunity to prove her abilities through concrete measures such as salary.

- The gender identity of transgender individuals is not recognized

> *"Generally, it affects me quite a lot, because I don't have as many rights as others, like on holidays like October 20th, March 8th, there are no bonuses or even gifts for girls. It makes me quite sad sometimes, but I don't know what to do now, it's already like this and I'm still stuck with the paperwork issue..."* - Nhu, transgender woman, 21 years old, migrant.

The experience of the transgender woman above focuses on the feeling of "sadness" at not being recognized as a woman in the workplace. This lack of recognition stems from not receiving acknowledgments on holidays specifically for women (October 20th or March 8th). Not receiving these benefits made them feel like their identity was denied, rather than about the material value of the gifts. The view that because their gender on the legal documents is male, and as such, they would not receive these benefits for women – somewhat reflecting the rigid practices of the workplace. The lack of flexibility in company policy could negatively impact the mental health of transgender individuals.

b. Forms of violence faced by transgender people

Among those who had experienced situations of not being treated fairly and respectfully in the workplace (132 people), when asked about forms of violence in the workplace, the results showed that in the past 12 months, 56.1% of them have faced verbal violence, with a higher rate for MtF (59.2%) compared to FtM (52.5%). Psychological violence was also a significant issue, affecting 34.8%, with MtF accounting for 39.4% and FtM for 29.5%. Physical violence and sexual violence were also reported, with rates of 6.8% and 5.3%, respectively.

When considering the most recent occurrence of these experiences, 15.1% reported it happening within the past week, with MtF accounting for 19.1% and FtM for 10.3%. Approximately 17.4% reported the experience occurring one month prior, with a higher rate for MtF (25.5%) compared to FtM (7.7%).

Regarding frequency, 11.6% reported these experiences were happening often, with MtF accounting for 14.9% and FtM for 7.7%. Approximately 23.3% of the total sample had experienced it multiple times, and 31.4% reported it happening sometimes a few times. A significant number (33.7%) reported it occurring but not often.

Table 2.5: Frequency and experiences of violence faced by transgender people in the workplace in the past 12 months

Classification	FtM (N=61)	MtF (N=71)	General (N=132)
Physical violence	3.30%	9.90%	6.80%
Verbal violence	52.50%	59.20%	56.10%
Psychological violence	29.50%	39.40%	34.80%
Sexual violence	3.30%	7.00%	5.30%
The last time it happened	**FtM (N=39)**	**MtF (N=47)**	**General (N=86)**
In a week	10.3%	19.1%	15.1%
In the last 2 weeks	15.4%	14.9%	15.1%
1 month ago	7.7%	25.5%	17.4%
3 months ago	25.6%	17.0%	20.9%

6 months ago	17.9%	14.9%	16.3%
(More than) 1 year ago	17.9%	14.9%	16.3%
Frequency	**FtM (N=39)**	**MtF (N=47)**	**General (N=86)**
Always, frequently	7.7%	14.9%	11.6%
Many times	23.1%	23.4%	23.3%
Sometimes	33.3%	29.8%	31.4%
It happened but not often	35.9%	31.9%	33.7%

The data collected by the research team through surveys shows that transgender individuals experience multiple forms of violence, primarily verbal and psychological violence. This finding aligns with the experiences gathered from qualitative data. Additionally, although accounting for 5.3%, the form of sexual violence also warrants attention. Specific experiences recorded according to the following classifications:

- Sexual harassment

Both transgender men and transgender women experience sexual harassment, as observed by the research team. While acts of harassment are various, most of them are physical. Some of them were to confirm the "gender" of the transgender individual.

> *"At that time, I just reacted. Actually, I was a bit fiercer than usual. That person was the line manager, he touched my chest and said, 'You have breasts, so you're a girl.' So I beat him."* - Trinh, transgender man, 29 years old, a person with disability

In this situation, the act of touching the transgender man's chest was not just sexual harassment but also implied a denial of his gender identity. The motive of "checking" to confirm gender, evidenced by the words 'You have breasts, so you're a girl', is a form of oppressive stigma aimed at devaluing the gender identity of the transgender person. This act also reflects deep-seated social prejudices that gender must be confirmed through specific biological characteristics, regardless of an individual's self-identification and privacy rights.

The participant's reaction ("beat him") was an act of self-defense, showing their outrage as they themselves acknowledged that their reaction was "fiercer than usual" when their personal rights were violated. This also demonstrates the pressure transgender people face when they not only have to defend their gender identity but also cope with subtle or overtly coercive violent acts from others.

Sexual harassment, when done to confirm the gender of transgender individuals, is a form of violence. Gender discrimination and physical violation are even more serious when the victim is a person with disability.

> *"When I went to work, the people around me were openly discriminatory. There was a time when I went to meet business partners, I was sitting there, there was a male security guard who just passed by and stroked my face. He said something like 'What a baby face.' Then two more colleagues passed by and did the same thing to me. I didn't understand. This was harassment."* - Kien, transgender woman, 31 years old, college graduate.

For this transgender woman, the act of "stroking face" by a security guard and then by two other colleagues was a disrespectful violation of her personal space.

The harassment was expressed through teasing, belittling her appearance and gender identity, typically through the comment "What a baby face". This shows how social prejudices are deeply ingrained towards transgender people, as they are not seen and treated professionally and equally, especially in a workplace where they need to demonstrate their abilities and build professional relationships.

The repetitive harassment done by multiple individuals reveals the systemic nature of the problem, where a lack of understanding, gender bias, and a culture of tolerating harassment are maintained. This also puts transgender people in a powerless position, not only because their gender identity is stigmatized, but also because harassment behaviors are often dismissed and/or not properly addressed by those around them.

- Verbal violence occurs when transgender individuals seek to use restrooms according to their gender identity.

The issue of restrooms for transgender people is frequently a topic of debate. There are numerous studies about the violence and harassment of transgender individuals. According to a report by the UCLA School of Law's Williams Institute, 70% of transgender people have experienced some form of violence or discrimination when using public restrooms. These forms include derogatory language, staring, denial of access, or even physical assault. These experiences lead to serious mental health consequences, such as anxiety and avoidance of public spaces[30]. In Viet Nam, discrimination against transgender people is estimated to be two to three times higher than other groups in the LGBTI community. Up to 46.7% of transgender women and 66.9% of transgender men participating in a 2016 study by the Institute for Studies of Society, Economics and Environment (iSEE) shared that they experienced discrimination when using restrooms[31].

> *"At that time, I knew I was a transgender man and I had already changed my appearance. I didn't use the women's restroom but the men's ones instead. Some people who knew me treated me like a man, so when we met in the restroom, they would just say 'Oh, hi,' they were very friendly. But some people who didn't like it would immediately say 'Why is this ## pédé coming in here,' they would swear, or they would say hurtful things, like 'You're a #### woman, why are you going into the men's restroom?'"* - Dat, transgender man, 31 years old, migrant

The transgender man experienced verbal violence when using the restroom consistent with his gender identity. Insulting words such as "## pédé" or "you're a #### woman, why are you going into the men's restroom" are highly personal attacks. This behavior is evidently gender-discriminatory, as their gender identity is denied and publicly ridiculed. These insults are not only directed at the choice of restroom but also target their personal identity. This causes deep psychological harm, especially when these words are uttered in public, making the person a target of social stigma.

In this case, verbal violence is expressed through two opposing attitudes: some people accept and respect his gender identity, while others show contempt and hatred. The transgender individual has to prepare for the uncertainty of how he will be treated. This not only increases feelings of isolation but also makes him constantly vigilant in public situations, such as using the restroom – a basic need.

30 Herman, J. L. (2013). Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and Its Impact on Transgender People's Lives. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.
31 Luong The Huy và Pham Quynh Phuong (2015). Is it because I am LGBT?: Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Viet Nam. Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment iSEE, P.68.

2.2.2. Impact of stigma, discrimination, and violence on some aspects of the economic wellbeing of transgender people

a. Impact on job opportunities, work motivation, and income

Violence and unfair treatment in the workplace create negative impacts on transgender people. 67.4% of those who experienced this reported feeling hurt and offended, with a higher rate for MtF (72.3%) compared to FtM (61.5%). 67.4% felt their self-worth diminished, losing pride and confidence, with FtM accounting for 71.8% and MtF for 63.8%. More details are presented in the Table 2.6 below:

Table 2.6: Level of impact from experiences of stigma, discrimination, and violence in the workplace on transgender people (Unit: %)

Impact from experiences of stigma, discrimination, and violence in the workplace	FtM (N=39)	MtF (N=47)	General (N=86)
Feel hurt and offended	61.5%	72.3%	67.4%
Feel like your self-worth and confidence is diminished	71.8%	63.8%	67.4%
Mental violence	29,50%	39,40%	34,80%
Scared**	15.4%	40.4%	29.1%
Angry	46.2%	44.7%	45.3%
Lose your work motivation, do not want to continue working	43.6%	59.6%	52.3%
Do not care and pay attention to those issues	12.8%	10.6%	11.6%

Experiences of stigma and discrimination during the recruitment process based on gender stereotypes have created consequences such as outright rejection of transgender individuals due to their gender identity, or silence after the job interview, as observed by the research team.

> *"...I once applied to work as a cashier in a very large bookstore in [Name of major city]. After submitting my application to the company, I waited for two weeks without any response. Then I went directly to the company; the responsible person informed me that my application had been rejected and she told me to go home. They said they don't hire people like me because the bookstore wants to hire cisgender women and not transgender people..."* - Hoa, transgender woman, 31 years old, university graduate.

> *"... At several companies where I want to work as a manual laborer, I often receive the response that they don't hire people like me, even before the interview. When they look at my application and my ID card – I had long hair on the ID but short hair in person – they would refuse, saying 'We don't accept you, we don't hire you,' or 'We don't recruit people like you.' They hadn't even interviewed me; they just looked at the application and replied like that..."* - Dat, transgender man, 31 years old, migrant.

According to the data, we found that the impact of losing job opportunities occurred across all participant criteria, including those who had graduated from university and high school, those with a migrant background, and people with disabilities. This finding reflects the risk of job loss and limited employment opportunities for transgender people in general, with their gender identity being a prominent underlying cause. The "blunt" rejections have demotivated some of them, consequently discouraging them from seeking further employment opportunities. .

According to the quantitative survey data, 49.6% of those who experienced stigma, discrimination, and violence in the workplace reported that it affected their personal relationships. This rate was higher for MtF (52.2%) compared to FtM (47.0%). The ability to focus and perform at work was significantly affected, with 68.4% reporting such impacts. 33.3% reported having their financial status impacted. Feelings of isolation were also a significant issue, affecting 55.3%, with a higher rate for MtF (58.4%) compared to FtM (52.2%).

The stigma, discrimination, and violence in the workplace also led to a decline in work motivation and delayed wage payment, causing stress for the individuals, making them unable to commit on a long-term basis. According to Table 2.2, 52.3% reported losing motivation to work, with MtF accounting for 59.6% and FtM for 43.6%. However, a small number (11.6%) reported that they did not pay much attention to these issues, with FtM at 12.8% and MtF at 10.6%.

> *"...when I feel uncomfortable at the workplace, it is difficult for me to work productively..."* - Tung, transgender woman, 24 years old, a person with disability.

> *"There were many times when I really wanted to quit working there, but as I had a six-month contract, I couldn't do it. If I quit, I would lose two million VND (deposit), so I didn't dare to."* - Nhu, transgender woman, 21 years old, migrant.

Gender stereotype prejudices not only impact job opportunities but also create many barriers to career advancement for transgender people. This is especially true for intersecting prejudices related to gender and the occupations in which transgender people can work. These sustaining prejudices result in transgender people having to question their own abilities and self-worth. They have to think of a trade-off between being oneself and pursuing the desired careers.

> *"...people said that pedagogical settings, require seriousness and maturity, at least in terms of gender, appearance, and paperwork. If they hire someone who doesn't fit, they are afraid that the children will be corrupted, growing up and being transgender would be very troublesome..."* - Hoa, transgender woman, 31 years old, university graduate.

> *"If I weren't transgender, I would be a pilot now. In my first year of university, my mother told me to change my hairstyle and become a flight attendant. Back then, it was a [Name of airline] flight attendant, so of course, you have to wear an ao dai and have long hair. However, there was still a chance to become a female pilot, as I really liked that profession. Flying. But when I thought about it for a month, I changed my mind. I told my mother that I couldn't wear an ao dai. So I lost that opportunity. That was the first job I lost..."* - Tai, transgender man, 31 years old, a person with disability.

b. Impact on mental health

77.2% of those who had experienced workplace discrimination due to being transgender reported having thought about leaving their job or changing careers due to negative experiences at work.

The data above was collected by the research team through the survey process. Facing stigma, discrimination, and violence harms transgender individuals; they feel hurt and lose their self-confidence. Repeated exposure to unpleasant verbal remarks by others can increase psychological stress and lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and a decline in self-esteem. Transgender people feel disrespected, and this affects their self-assurance and job satisfaction.

> *" I just want to forget everything that make me feel negative in life. Any time it's mentioned, I wish that I wasn't a part of the LGBTI community."* - Dat, transgender man, 31 years old, migrant.

When transgender people are stigmatized or discriminated against at work, they may feel as if their gender identity is a burden and is the root of their life's problems. The lack of acceptance and the discrimination make them feel ashamed and unwilling to continue living as who they are.

Table 2.7: The impact of experiences of stigma, discrimination, or violence in the workplace on the mental health of transgender people during work

The impact of experiences of stigma, discrimination, or violence in the workplace on the mental health	FtM (N=115)	MtF (N=113)	General (N=228)
Constant stress	53.0%	54.9%	53.9%
Anxiety or panic attacks	33.9%	43.4%	38.6%
Depression	27.8%	38.1%	32.9%
Insomnia or difficulty sleeping	37.4%	54.0%	45.6%
Sadness and discomfort but not too heavy	5.2%	4.4%	4.8%

*Chi-square test; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.001*

53.9% of those who had been discriminated against reported experiencing constant stress, with almost equal rates between FtM (53.0%) and MtF (54.9%). Another significant proportion (38.6%) experienced anxiety or panic attacks, with a higher rate for MtF (43.4%) compared to FtM (33.9%).

Depression was also a worrying consequence, affecting 32.9%, with MtF accounting for 38.1% and FtM for 27.8%. Insomnia or difficulty sleeping was another major issue with statistical significance, affecting 45.6%, with a higher rate for MtF (54.0%) compared to FtM (37.4%).

Regarding this issue, Brewster et al. (2014) pointed out that in employment, transgender people are at risk of frequently facing feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and fear related to their being transgender. These feelings have their roots in the precariousness in their employment status, stigma from colleagues, and other stressors[32].

32 Brewster, M. E., Velez, B. L., Mennicke, A., & Tebbe, E. (2014). Voices from beyond: A thematic content analysis of transgender employees' workplace experiences. Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 1(2), 159–169. doi:10.1037/sgd0000030]

This also reflects an important issue: when transgender people face stigma and discrimination in the workplace, they not only face immediate harm but also long-term impacts on their mental health. These experiences can lead to feelings of hopelessness, decreased self-esteem, and loss of trust in themselves.

c. Impact on physical health

Negative experiences in the workplace caused various physical health problems for transgender people. Frequent headaches were one of the most common issues, affecting 48.2%, with a slightly higher rate for MtF (49.6%) compared to FtM (47.0%).

In addition, 32.5% reported experiencing uncontrolled weight gain or loss, with a higher rate for MtF (38.1%) compared to FtM (27.0%). Illness or general health decline was also a serious issue, affecting 34.6%, with MtF accounting for 37.2% and FtM for 32.2%.

> *"...I made suicidal attempts and had self-harm behaviors."* - Ngoc, transgender man, 27 years old, high school graduate

When under high psychological pressure, transgender people may feel so hopeless that they resort to self-harming behaviors such as suicide attempts or self-injury. The consequence of enduring prolonged stigma and discrimination is severe depression. This affects both their mental health and physical health, potentially causing permanent injuries or even death. It shows the severity of the harm that transgender people endure when their gender identity is not recognized and/is stigmatized.

2.3. Factors that challenge and facilitate the economic wellbeing of transgender people

2.3.1. Factors that challenge the economic wellbeing of transgender people

a. Lack of a legal framework for gender recognition and labor protection for transgender people

Based on the experiences of transgender participants, a significant barrier they face during recruitment and in the workplace is the mismatch between their gender identity and the legal sex marker on their official documents. Accompanying this are limitations in welfare benefits and recognition in the workplace, leading to consequences not only for their overall wellbeing but also for their labor productivity. The absense of a Gender Affirmation Law is a factor contributing to the persistence of this situation. Legal gender recognition goes beyond changes at the individual level; it provides a critical legal foundation for the development and implementation of broader policies related to labor, gender equality that provide protection for transgender workers.

> *"At first, everything was good; my interview went quite well. But then with the contract, they required my ID card. I was quite hesitant to hand it over to the recruitment team. When they saw it, they were quite surprised. They said I was male but looked like a female; they also asked if this was my or someone else's ID. I explained a lot, and they tentatively accepted me after some time. My manager said that she 'overlooked' this issue because I already had some experience. From then on, I started working and teaching there. In general, the biggest trouble I had was when I gave my ID card to the recruitment team; everything else was quite okay."* - Nhu, transgender woman, 21 years old, migrant.

The example above shows that a "tentatively accepted" reaction from the recruiter is common when receiving information about an employee's gender identity. Although the recruiter did not comment on their appearance as in the former cases, they "tentatively accept" by "overlooking" the gender expression being different from the legal sex marker on the ID card. This reaction inadvertently creates a state of "bestowing favor" upon the transgender person. Although the recruiter accepted her, there was still a scrutinizing and weighing of her competence against her gender identity, despite the fact that gender identity was irrelevant to the job. The participant described the work process as "well" and "okay", other than the difficulties in exchanging information about the gender on her ID card. This reality reinforces the need for legal gender recognition for transgender people, so that they can access employment opportunities more easily.

Interview results with companies show that many organizations have not yet developed or prioritized specific policies related to transgender people. This significantly creates barriers for the group to access formal employment as well as their economic rights. The absence of official policies can also explain why transgender people are not mentioned in recruitment processes or employee benefits.

> *" Our policies were written quite a long time ago. As such, it is not yet updated in written words – in regards to the group of transgender people."* – A representative of a Viet Nam-based multinational company.

In addition, small-scale enterprises showed less interest in establishing policies from the outset due to a lack of awareness. This demonstrates the reality that small businesses often only develop policies once issues are brought up. As such, transgender employees at risk do not receive clear and timely protection.

> *"Currently, there aren't any... LGBTI employees at our company... and the policies also. We will plan for that in the future, but now as these issues haven't been brought up, we haven't developed the policies yet..."* – A private company.

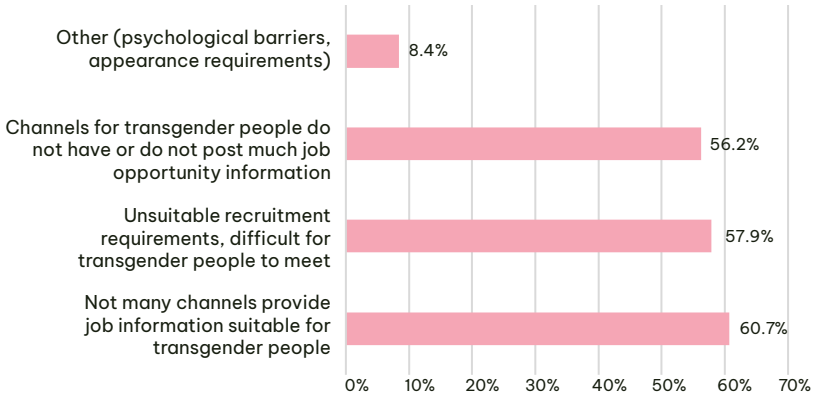
47.7% reported that their workplace did not have regulations, policies, and support resources for transgender people in situations of stigma and discrimination in the workplace, and 48.8% of the total sample did not know or were unclear about the existence of these policies. Only a small percentage (3.5%) reported that their workplace had specific regulations or policies to address issues of discrimination and stigma, with this rate lower for MtF (2.1%) compared to FtM (5.1%). Specifically, in the 3 cases reporting such policies, 2 were foreign/international organizations, and 1 was a domestic limited liability company.

b. Lack of availability of suitable job opportunities and information

Regarding the availability of suitable job opportunities and information for participants, 54.9% of the total sample could find many job opportunities and information. However, this rate was lower for MtF (45.6%) compared to FtM (62.8%), although the difference was not statistically significant due to the small sample size. A significant number (32.7%) felt that opportunities existed, but information was limited, and 12.4% felt there were few opportunities and little information for them.

Difficulties in accessing job opportunity information were mainly attributed to a lack of suitable information channels (60.7%), unsuitable job requirements (57.9%), and channels for transgender people not posting many job opportunities (56.2%). These issues had similar rates between the FtM and MtF groups.

Chart 2.6: Reasons for difficulties in accessing job opportunity information for transgender people (N=178 - Unit: %)



c. Prejudices of the employers

The research shows that transgender people often face difficulties right from the job search stage, mainly due to deep-seated social prejudices. Gender stereotypes from employers are manifested through common actions noted in this research, including judging appearance and demeanor, using pronouns based on the gender on official documents, and not recognizing the gender identity of transgender employees. This is partly reflected in the data for the FtM group, with 52.0% of those who openly disclosed their gender identity reporting that they always felt unfairly treated, compared to 39.6% of those who did not disclose and 59.5% of those who occasionally disclosed.

Meanwhile, the MtF group had a higher rate of occasionally feeling unfairly treated when they disclosed their gender identity (50.0%), compared to 43.5% of those who did not disclose and 45.2% of those who occasionally disclosed.

Table 2.8: Experiences of unfairness in job seeking and application by level of gender identity disclosure (%)

Gender identity	Frequency of the experiences	Not disclose	Sometimes	Disclose	Total
FtM	Always	39.6% (19)	59.5% (25)	52.0% (65)	50.7% (109)
	Sometimes	54.2% (26)	38.1% (16)	41.6% (52)	43.7% (94)
	Never	6.3% (3)	2.4% (1)	6.4% (8)	5.6% (12)
	Total	**100% (48)**	**100% (42)**	**100% (125)**	**100% (215)**
MtF	Always	45.7% (21)	50.0% (21)	39.1% (36)	43.3% (78)
	Sometimes	43.5% (20)	45.2% (19)	50.0% (46)	47.2% (85)
	Never	10.9% (5)	4.8% (2)	10.9% (10)	9.4% (17)
	Total	**100% (46)**	**100% (42)**	**100% (92)**	**100% (180)**
Total	Always	42.6% (40)	54.8% (46)	46.5% (101)	47.3% (187)
	Sometimes	48.9% (46)	41.7% (35)	45.2% (98)	45.3% (179)
	Never	8.5% (8)	3.6% (3)	8.3% (18)	7.3% (29)
	Total	**100% (94)**	**100% (84)**	**100% (217)**	**100% (395)**

Note: Numbers in parentheses are the number of people, external numbers are percentages (%) calculated within each gender identity disclosure group.

As observed by the research team, there exists a correlation between openly expressing oneself and the level of experienced injustice and violence during processes of job seeking, application, and at the workplace.

The level of gender identity disclosure can affect the experience of violence in the workplace. Transgender people who openly disclose their gender identity tend to face more violence. 64.4% of the total sample (N=85) reported experiencing violence in the workplace, with a higher rate in the openly disclosed group (69.9%) compared to the non-disclosed group (55.9%) and the occasionally disclosed group (60.0%). For the FtM group, 69.7% of those who openly disclosed their gender identity reported experiencing violence in the workplace, compared to 61.1% of those who did not disclose and 50.0% of those who occasionally disclosed. In the MtF group, this rate was 70.0% for those who openly disclosed their gender identity, 66.7% for those who occasionally disclosed, and 50.0% for those who did not disclose.

Table 2.9: Experiences of violence in the workplace by gender identity and level of disclosure

Gender identity	Level of disclosure	Have experiences of violence	Have experiences of violence (%)	Do not have experiences of violence	Do not have experiences of violence (%)	Total
FtM	Do not disclose	11	61.1%	7	38.9%	18
FtM	Sometimes	5	50.0%	5	50.0%	10
FtM	Disclose	23	69.7%	10	30.3%	33
Total FtM	–	**39**	–	**22**	–	**61**
MtF	Do not disclose	8	50.0%	8	50.0%	16
MtF	Sometimes	10	66.7%	5	33.3%	15
MtF	Disclose	28	70.0%	12	30.0%	40
Total MtF	–	**46**	–	**25**	–	**71**
Total	–	**85**	**64.4%**	**47**	**35.6%**	**132**

Apart from gender stereotypes and unfair treatment, employers may also hold stereotypes related to occupation towards transgender people.

> *"Some industries are prioritized in the labor market, such as restaurants, hotels, services, entertainment, or marketing. People will immediately assume that I work in those fields, rather than in a field such as translation. This is because they have met many people who are exceptional in such industries. They have that assumption that 'people like me' will be good in those areas. I'm not sure if it's really an advantage or a prejudice, maybe it's both."* - Mai, transgender man, 27 years old, migrant.

In this context, this is the act of labeling others based on superficial signs or initial impressions. As in this case, solely through the expression, demeanor, or appearance of the transgender person, he is assumed to be suitable for service-related jobs, such as in the fields of hospitality or entertainment. This reflects stereotypes, where people refer to preconceptions to judge others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)[33].

According to the International Labour Organization's article "Q&A on Business, Discrimination and Equality" (2018)[34], job-related stereotypes maintain or create classifications of hierarchies, in which some industries are more highly valued, while others are underestimated. This can lead to discrimination or missed talent because of the restrictive belief that one should work in certain fields, while their strengths might lie in other fields. On a personal level, in the study "The gender stereotypes and their impacts on the career choice of Tra Vinh University students" (2022)[35], the person may lose the opportunity to pursue careers they are truly interested in.

d. Educational level of transgender people

A transgender woman who does not use social media shared that her biggest difficulty in finding work was illiteracy. This situation prevented her from taking notes or managing goods, even though some workplaces "wanted to hire" her, but ultimately could not due to minimum paperwork requirements. As a result, she had to do heavy manual labor, such as carrying heavy goods, but still "tried to work" to make ends meet. This data contrasts with the survey results, where 69.7% (N=287) out of the total sample (N=412) had an educational level of vocational training or higher. However, through in-depth interviews, we found that in localities outside major cities, transgender people still face various difficulties. This difference arises from the fact that the survey was conducted online, easily reaching transgender people who use social media, while other interviewees did not use social media and lived in local areas. This finding helps make the report more comprehensive regarding the lives of transgender people.

> *"The hardest part is that I'm illiterate. Sometimes people want to hire me, but since I can't read or write, I can't record anything in their books. That's why I haven't been able to find a job that feels a bit easier or more comfortable. I have to do hard labor. Sometimes when I transport goods, carrying over fifty kilograms a day is kind of normal. Often, a single item can weigh over a hundred kilograms. But I tell myself that I need the money, so I have to push myself to work hard."* - Minh, transgender woman, 36 years old, does not use social media.

The above case illustrates a chain of intersecting disadvantages and strongly demonstrates the intersectionality of issues for transgender people, which increase the barriers: (1) Limited literacy skills: Illiteracy prevents the person from meeting the basic requirements of the job, such as writing invoices or updating records; (2) Gender identity: Being transgender can increase the risk of rejection, stigma, or being assigned only simple, heavy labor; (3) Not using social media: Lack of information and connection channels further makes it difficult for her to access more diverse job opportunities.

The lack of access to suitable work does not reflect her lack of ability. Rather, it is the consequence of her not being provided opportunities for personal development. The lack of basic education, combined with social barriers against transgender people, has pushed many individuals into heavy manual labor with precarious income and unsafe working conditions. This not only negatively affects their physical and mental health, but also limits the potential for sustainable economic development. The analysis in

33 Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), The social psychology of intergroup relations (pp. 33-37). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
34 Q&A on Business, Discrimination and Equality. (2018, October 23). International Labour Organization.
35 The gender stereotypes and their impacts on the career choice of Tra Vinh University students. (2022, October 27) 123doc.

Section 2.1 shows that educational level is directly correlated with income level, clearly demonstrating the important role of education in improving economic wellbeing. This situation reveals the risk of a vicious cycle of "lack of skills – lack of opportunities – heavy labor – economic precariousness," thereby continuing to hinder opportunities for long-term improvement in the quality of life for transgender people.

e. Inadequate mechanisms for receiving feedback, handling complaints, and protecting employee information

In many companies, the mechanisms for receiving feedback and handling complaints are not designed to effectively protect and support transgender employees. One issue is the absence of procedures for resolving conflicts related to gender identity stigma. An employee shared:

> *"... when I joined that company at that time, there were no granted rights for LGBTI people. Also, if there are personal conflicts among the employees, the company couldn't resolve or mediate [...] as they had too much work to handle. Although we had a trade union, they are only responsible for matters such as holidays, healthcare, and maternity care, while no one would talk about the rights of LGBTI people..."* - Dat, transgender man, 31 years old, migrant.

When there is no clear mechanism to handle cases of discrimination, internal conflicts could be prolonged, which erodes the trust of employees. In the long term, this can lead to workforce instability, increased turnover rates, and decreased employee engagement with the company.

> *"...I was considered for promotion, but during the leadership's discussions, the issue of my being transgender was mentioned, and the job involved traveling. I was rejected because I wasn't a cisgender man. There had been such a case before, so I decided to quit after I learned about the information..."* - Hao, transgender man with migrant background, 24 years old.

When faced with violent and unfair treatment situations, up to 60.5% of cases remained silent, accepted, and ignored it, with this rate significantly higher in the MtF group (70.2%) compared to FtM (48.7%). Approximately 26.7% questioned themselves for not having done well enough, with MtF accounting for 31.9% and FtM for 20.5%.

Some people expressed their views directly to protect themselves (36.0%), with similar rates between MtF (36.2%) and FtM (35.9%). 14.0% recorded the incident, and 10.5% reported it to superiors or the human resources department. 8.1% tried to seek support from trade unions or labor protection organizations. 3.5% filed complaints and sought legal support.

The rate of participants who endured and ignored unfair treatment during the recruitment process was similarly high. 40.9% of those who had experienced injustice in recruitment reported doing nothing, enduring and ignoring it, and continuing to apply and go through the recruitment process, with this rate significantly higher in the MtF group (48.0%) compared to FtM (34.0%).

A large number (57.7%) decided to give up and look for recruitment opportunities elsewhere, with FtM accounting for 58.5% and MtF for 56.9%. Approximately 9.1% complained to the company or recruitment organization, and 2.9% reported to authorities or filed lawsuits.

Table 2.10: Coping mechanisms of transgender people when faced with unfair treatment in recruitment (Unit: %)

Responses when faced with unfair treatment in recruitment	FtM (N=106)	MtF (N=102)	General (N=208)
Do nothing, stay silent, accept and/ or ignore it	34.0%	48.0%	40.9%
Decide to quit, look for other job options	58.5%	56.9%	57.7%
File a complaint with the recruiting company	11.3%	6.9%	9.1%
Report to the authorities and seek legal support	1.9%	3.9%	2.9%
Share with your friends, acquaintances, trusted people for support **	32.1%	47.1%	39.4%
Document the incident, post about it on social media	10.4%	13.7%	12.0%

*Chi-square test; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.001*

As observed by the research team, a reporting and feedback mechanism is important at all stages. The motivation to provide feedback and to trust are crucial for those who experience stigma, discrimination, and violence in the workplace. According to the survey data, there are 188 cases where transgender employees did nothing and endured unfair treatment during recruitment. 53.2% explained that it was because they did not believe that feedback would yield results. Finances were also an important factor, as 29.8% knew they did not have the financial means to pursue complaints, with MtF accounting for a significantly higher rate (38.5%) compared to FtM (21.6%). For 48.9%, it was because they lacked motivation or did not feel safe.

Regarding health issues, 23.4% felt they did not have the physical – mental capacities to follow the complaint process, with MtF accounting for 28.6% and FtM for 18.6%. 25.5% reported not having time to pursue complaints, and 29.3% reported not having enough information or means to file a complaint. A small percentage (4.3%) wanted to avoid trouble when filing complaints or avoid consequences for other job opportunities.

Among the 153 people who reported issues of unfair treatment during the recruitment process, only 15.7% (24 cases) received responses and their cases got resolved. For this group, 16 people (66.7%) shared that they were satisfied with the outcome, while the rest either did not know the outcome (3 people) or were not satisfied (5 people) with the recruiter's resolution.

Transgender workers could also face violence in the workplace without effective protection measures. A transgender man shared with us:

> *"I silently let things go. In an office, if a fight broke out, I was not sure who would intervene and support me. If there were anyone, it would be women. Once I hit that man (who hurt me), I would be the first one to suffer. Why? Because I'm not sure if I could hit him back. Or even if I could hit him here in the company, he might seek revenge outside of the company. You know, I work far from home; it's almost 30 kilometers round trip in a day. So I have to think about my own safety."* - Dat, transgender man, 31 years old, migrant.

Another factor to consider is the limitations in information exchange mechanisms and access to support resources. Current internal communication practices often only apply to employees who have openly disclosed their gender identity, while many transgender people who have not disclosed or do not want to disclose their identity may have difficulty seeking support. This requires more inclusive policies and procedures, ensuring that all employees, regardless of whether who they are, and whether they have disclosed their gender identity or not, can access support resources safely and fairly. At the same time, in the organizational culture, personnel awareness regarding gender diversity, inclusivity, as well as issues of discrimination and stigma need to be raised.

In fact, only 2 out of 9 employers who participated in our interviews shared that they provided training or invited experts to share knowledge about gender and sexual diversity. In addition, some companies have gender equality policies but only focused on balancing the number of 'men' and 'women'. As such, employers need to educate themselves to create a more inclusive, equitable work environment for everyone, including transgender employees.

2.3.2 Factors that facilitate the economic wellbeing of transgender people

a. Open-minded and inclusive leadership and organizational culture

When asked about support from various sources in the workplace when facing stigma and discrimination, 53.0% reported receiving support from colleagues, with FtM accounting for 55.7% and MtF for 50.7%.

Superiors were also an important source of support for 36.4%, although this rate was higher for FtM (42.6%) compared to MtF (31.0%). Trade unions provided support for 12.1%, with FtM accounting for 14.8% and MtF for 9.9%. Human resources was considered a source of support for 18.2%, with FtM accounting for 23.0% and MtF for 14.1%. However, it is concerning that 15.2% of the participants had no one in the workplace to seek support from, with this rate higher for MtF (21.1%) compared to FtM (8.2%).

Demonstrating respect toward transgender individuals in the workplace is a good practice that contributes to building an inclusive work environment and enhancing productivity. Positive accounts shared by members of the transgender community suggest that specific measures implemented by some employers to support transgender staff have yielded tangible and beneficial outcomes.

> *"...I am glad that my boss was very supportive. When my boss introduced me to everyone, they would always mention my preferred pronouns or introduce me as a male person. I felt supported by them, as I didn't have to say I'm transgender to others, or that I want to be seen as a man."* - Phong, transgender man, 22 years old, a person with disability.

Receiving support from their superiors at work, such as having their preferred pronouns and wishes addressed, helps reduce the pressure of disclosing one's identity and enhances feelings of safety and recognition. In the situation of the participant above, the superior proactively introduces him as male. This helped him avoid having to explain himself and getting into an awkward situation. Also, it builds trust and a sense of support in a work culture that strives for diversity.

> *"...they respect and look at me just as everyone else. They don't see me as a transgender person, but as a woman, like a sister."* - Lan, transgender woman, 21 years old, high school graduate.

We also found that the leadership plays a particularly critical role in creating an equitable, respectful, and inclusive environment. Not only in the case analyzed above, but leaders can proactively exchange information with transgender individuals by listening to their needs and discussing potential risks of

discrimination. Moreover, the leader's perspective will be reflected through specific organizational practices, starting with asking about preferred pronouns. While this proactivity does not guarantee comprehensive protection for transgender individuals, it signals an effort towards inclusivity, and being informed about employee information is helpful for arranging suitable job positions.

> *"...on my first day of work, there was an introduction about the company culture, we got to know each other, and I was asked about my preferred pronouns, which really impressed me..."* - Trinh, transgender man, 29 years old, person with disability.

Some managers expressed a willingness to support transgender people in the future, but this still relied on personal goodwill rather than institutional policies. This shows that support for transgender people in the current working environment is rather spontaneous and depends on the individual will of decision-makers. If the employers are not aware of the issue, transgender applicants and employees might face various barriers in accessing equal job opportunities and benefits.

> *"If one day, I can open a massage spa... I will definitely protect the transgender people... who want to be good citizens."* – A self-employed individual

b. Workplace protection policies and information confidentiality mechanisms

Some corporations have non-discrimination policies, but this often depends on the mindset of the leadership. At the same time, these policies are mainly implemented in organizations with operational characteristics favorable to the development of inclusive policies.

> *"My hospital... won't have the issue of gender discrimination or stigma... I am also a leader of the hospital..."* – A private company.

> *"In the personnel regulations and policies... there is a clause about non-discrimination at [Company Name] ..."* - Private company.

A focus on professional competence and on protecting personal information not only helps to create an inclusive work environment but also contributes to enhancing employee performance and engagement, , especially for vulnerable groups such as transgender people. According to the International Labour Organization's guidelines[36], non-discriminatory policies and practices in the workplace have a positive impact on labor efficiency, engagement, and loyalty of the employees. Research by Badgett et al. (2013) indicates that employees who feel valued based on their skills and contributions rather than judged by personal factors tend to be more engaged with their work and the organization[37].

> *"I got a job at a restaurant. Generally, the environment there was very friendly. As soon as I came for the interview, I immediately told them that I was transgender, and whether this would be an issue for the manager and the restaurant. The manager replied that it is not an issue as long as I could do my work efficiently; other irrelevant factors do not matter. After working there, I haven't moved anywhere else."* - Tram, transgender woman, 30 years old, migrant.

The research team highlighted an effective practice using a trauma-reporting device with a closed-loop feedback system, allowing staff to quickly report any issues they face while working. The model is

36 ILO (2017) Inclusion of LGBTI workers in the workplace: A good practices guide
37 Badgett, M. V. L., Durso, L. E., & Kastanis, A. (2013). The Business Case for LGBT Equality: What We Know and What We Need to Know. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law

closed and anonymous, ensuring the safety of the reporter. This ensures internal trust in the organization and motivates the employees to provide feedback.

> *"There is an anti-discrimination policy in my workplace. We have a trauma reporting machine for encountering difficult situations. The report will be directed to the department head, who will process that information."* - Phong, transgender man, 22 years old, a person with disability.

> *"...I suggested to the HR department that I was not very comfortable when I came out to a colleague (the security guard) as transgender. He then kept staring at me. The HR department asked if I wanted to move down to the parking lot inside the building, I really appreciated that ..."* - Trinh, transgender man, 29 years old, a person with disability.

Besides the anonymous reporting system and closed-loop processing procedures, acknowledging incidents and having appropriate responses is also important for transgender people to be heard. A safe and respectful work environment is what transgender people always seek. This is also a major criterion in the job search process of the community, as found by the research team.

> *"The third point I want to say is that during the work process, I received respect and integration with equality among all employees. Those are the three criteria that I prioritize during the work process."* - Bao, 30 years old, transgender man, high school graduate.

In general, the policies for transgender people in Vietnamese companies are not systemically institutionalized. Rather, they are developed based on the personal awareness and viewpoints of the leadership. This emphasizes the need for clear and mandatory policy frameworks to ensure labor rights for transgender people.

2.4. The role of communities, groups, and networks in supporting the economic wellbeing of transgender people

According to the survey, 39.8% of both FtM and MtF groups reported they are currently being members of communities, organizations or groups. With the majority being young people, 53.9% aged 16-24 and 44.9% aged 22-44, it is implied that not many transgender people choose to participate in community networks and groups.

As shared by the participants, these groups are platforms for them to connect and support each other in various issues, such as coming out, relationships, gender-affirming care. However, more specific support and topics are needed for the diverse aspirations and expectations of the community members.

> *"[Online] Groups are useful for networking. People can post job opportunities, or which companies are more LGBTI friendly. Yet, most of the jobs posted are short-term basis or do not require qualifications, which do not fit my career goals."* - Mai, transgender man, 27 years old, migrant.

> *"I think that when there are more public groups that get widely promoted, there will be more recruiters – also those from outside the community. This might be better and easier for job seekers, as right now the information spread in online groups is rather scattered."* - Vinh, 33 years old, transgender woman, university graduate.

Online groups offer a space for transgender people to share their difficulties in applying for jobs, with the hope of receiving guidance, advice, and timely support. Rather than professional advice, what they receive are mostly encouragement and comfort from other members ().

> *"They will go online and complain about going to work and being stigmatized because they are transgender, or that it's too difficult to find a job, that kind of thing... There will be advice, but most of them will be like 'Just try your best, sis, accept your fate...'"* - Lan, transgender woman, 21 years old, high school graduate.

According to Community Psychology theory, supporting transgender people in finding employment goes beyond simply skills counseling or sharing job information. It requires creating a safe community environment that fosters individual agency and empowerment. According to Sarason (1974), a sense of belonging within a community helps transgender individuals feel less isolated and more resilient to social pressures[38].

According to our quantitative data, preparing application documents presents the biggest challenge, with 40.5% of the sample reporting difficulties. This rate is significantly higher in the MtF group (47.2%) compared to FtM (34.9%). Writing cover letters and application forms is also an obstacle, with 21.5% of the total sample experiencing difficulties, of which MtF accounted for 27.8%, significantly higher than the 16.3% for FtM.

23% of the sample reported difficulties in the application submission steps and procedures. 26.5% faced difficulties in finding job information. Direct interviews (40.5%) with employers and job tests (18%) were challenging. There were no significant differences between the two groups (MtF and FtM) here.

38 Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Psychological Empowerment: Issues and Illustrations. American Journal of Community Psychology, 23(5), 581–599

Table 2.11: Difficulties and challenges faced by transgender people during job search in relation to gender identity (Unit: %)

What difficulties/challenges did you encounter during the job search	FtM (N=215)	MtF (N=180)	General (N=395)
Preparing application documents (CV, resume, etc.)*	34.9%	47.2%	40.5%
Writing a cover letter, application letter**	16.3%	27.8%	21.5%
Submitting application documents	20.5%	26.1%	23.0%
Searching for recruitment information	23.3%	30.6%	26.6%
Commuting to work, relocating for work**	14.0%	25.6%	19.2%
Face-to-face interviews with the employer	40.9%	40.0%	40.5%
Taking entrance exams/tests	16.3%	20.0%	18.0%
Did not encounter any difficulties or challenges	26.0%	16.7%	21.8%
Other	1.4%	4.4%	2.8%

*Chi-square test; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.001*

Community groups and organizations can build safe spaces for transgender individuals to connect and share experiences; they can also provide psychological support, interview training, as well as connect them with non-discriminatory companies. They are platforms for recruitment information and could support transgender people during and after the job search process.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE THE ECONOMIC WELLBEING OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN VIET NAM

The analysis and discussion of the results show that transgender people in Viet Nam are facing many forms of stigma, discrimination, and violence both during the job search and employment. Although their average income is higher than the per capita average, the majority still do not achieve a stable standard of living that meets their specific needs. These needs could include: gender-affirming healthcare, coping with the psycho-social consequences of stigma and violence, as well as personal development and improving the quality of life.

The main barriers stem from gender stereotypes, a lack of understanding of gender and sexual diversity, along with legal gaps in gender recognition and the protection of labor rights for transgender people. These factors not only affect physical and mental health but also undermine the work motivation and potential contributions of transgender people in the labor force.

Based on the favorable factors and challenges presented in Section 2.3, the research team proposes recommendations targeting three key stakeholder groups: the Government, employers, and community-based organizations and groups. A total of 11 specific recommendations are put forward to improve the economic wellbeing of transgender people in Viet Nam and to ensure fairer, safer, and more sustainable working conditions. The detailed recommendations are as follows:

3.1. Recommendations for the Government

To ensure the legal gender recognition and labor rights of transgender people, to promote policies on gender-affirming healthcare.

Recommendation 01: Speeding up the adoption of the Gender Affirmation Law to ensure the right to change civil status and protect transgender individuals comprehensively

The enactment of a Gender Affirmation Law is a key step towards realizing the right to gender recognition and protecting the legitimate rights of transgender people in Viet Nam. The draft Law has been developed by the Government and relevant parties for over seven years since 2017, with a continuous and extensive policy consultation process. In this journey, transgender community organizations, along with organizations working for the rights of LGBTI people and human rights, have played an active role in providing information, professional opinions, and policy advocacy to ensure that the content of the draft Law accurately reflects the needs and lived realities of the community.

The research team recommends that the National Assembly and relevant authorities prioritize and expedite the passage of the Law as soon as possible. This will be an important legal foundation for developing policies related to healthcare, labor, social security, and gender equality – gradually improving the quality of life and development opportunities for transgender people in Viet Nam.

Recommendation 02: Incorporate the terms "gender identity" and "sexual orientation" into the legal system to establish a foundation for developing and enforcing labor rights protection policies of transgender people

Specifically, this recommendation proposes the inclusion of the terms "gender identity" and "sexual orientation" to the following documents:

(1) The glossary and basic principles of gender equality of the 2006 Law on Gender Equality

(2) The content of the term "Discrimination in labor" of the 2019 Labor Code

Adding these terms will provide lawmakers and employers with a basis for establishing frameworks, as well as policies to ensure the rights of employees. According to the World Bank (2019), in countries with policies protecting the labor rights of LGBTI people, the unemployment rate in this group is significantly lower than in countries without similar policies[39]. Non-discrimination policies in the workplace will also have a positive impact on the mental health, engagement levels, and labor productivity of employees belonging to minority groups, including transgender people. A safe and fair work environment not only helps transgender people maintain stable employment but also creates conditions for them to develop their professional skills, thereby contributing positively to the economy.

In reality, the process of drafting, amending, and supplementing laws can take years. However, this should not limit employers from developing their own internal policies to ensure the rights and welfare of their employees. Institutionalizing policies – which protect the labor rights of transgender people – means incorporating anti-discrimination regulations, ensuring equal employment opportunities, and appropriate support policies into the legal system and corporate governance mechanisms. This not only helps ensure the rights of transgender workers but also creates a clear legal framework, helping companies fulfill their social responsibilities systematically and transparently.

Institutionalizing policies brings various benefits for employers and transgender employees. A clear policy mechanism helps ensure that transgender employees have access to equal employment opportunities without being excluded due to social prejudice.

On the other hand, for potential employers, institutionalizing policies also helps them minimize legal risks and improve the efficiency of human resource management. When a policy is codified into law, they have the guideline to follow, avoiding arbitrary handling or unintentionally violating principles of equality. This, in turn, reduces the risk of litigation or reputational damage. In addition, a diverse and inclusive work environment also helps companies attract talent from various groups. In the labor market nowadays, this is a competitive advantage.

Based on these observations, this recommendation outlines three key proposed measures addressed to the Government:

- First, it is necessary to require enterprises above a certain scale to adopt internal gender equality policies, which clearly stipulate non-discrimination regulations in regards to gender identity in recruitment, promotion, and labor benefits.

- Second, efforts should be put into studying and applying systems for evaluating the level of inclusion in organizations, similar to the Corporate Equality Index (CEI)[40] to encourage corporations to proactively build an equal work environment and enhance brand reputation.

39 World Bank. (2019). The Economic Cost of Exclusion and the Gains of Inclusion of LGBT People: A Case Study of Serbia. Retrieved from https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/31280
40 https://www.hrc.org/resources/corporate-equality-index

- Third, it is necessary to implement mandatory training programs on gender equality and the rights of transgender people for managers and personnel, which aims to raise awareness and minimize barriers from personal prejudices.

Recommendation 03: Develop and expand financial assistance policies for gender-affirming healthcare services

The government plays an important role in establishing policies to protect and support the transgender community, especially in medical issues. Encourage the involvement of health insurance and social security funds in supporting the costs of gender-affirming healthcare interventions for transgender people. This will not only help reduce the financial burden but also ensure equal access to essential healthcare services for transgender people.

In addition, it is necessary to issue accompanying policies related to hormone drug price frameworks and include these drugs in the list of drugs covered by health insurance. In Thailand, for instance, the government has begun providing financial support for gender-affirming care through health funds. The Thai Ministry of Public Health has approved a budget of 145.63 million baht (approximately USD 4.3 million) to provide healthcare services for transgender people, including hormone replacement therapy. This is to support approximately 200,000 transgender people out of about 314,808 transgender people in Thailand, to emphasize the importance of comprehensive healthcare for the community[41]. When the government provides financial support policies for transgender people, it helps them access healthcare services and creates a fair, inclusive environment for all groups in society.

Recommendation 04: Improve the legal framework and policy development for psychological counseling and mental healthcare services tailored to the needs of transgender people and the LGBTI community

Alongside policies supporting financial and economic wellbeing and physical healthcare, ensuring the mental health of transgender people is an indispensable element in building a safe and sustainable living and working environment. Survey results indicate that when facing stigma, discrimination, and violence, 51.8% of survey participants expressed a need for psychological support from professionals, with this rate being significantly higher for transgender women (MtF) at 61.9% compared to transgender men (FtM) at 41.7%. Simultaneously, 58.3% of the total sample proposed counseling and psychological support programs as one of their top priority needs – with a higher rate in the MtF group (61.9%) compared to the FtM group (54.8%).

Based on this, the research team recommends that the Government implement the following solutions:

Firstly, improve the legal framework and professional standards for mental healthcare services, which include:

- Updating and supplementing regulations related to psychological counseling for vulnerable groups, especially transgender people and the LGBTI community.

- Issuing specific professional practice guidelines that require mental health professionals to be trained in gender diversity, non-judgmental intervention, and client-centered support methods.

- Strengthening mechanisms for monitoring and quality control of counseling services to ensure safety, reliability, and appropriateness for the specific needs of the group.

41 *https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2948157/transgender-services-get-145-million-baht-boost*

Secondly, promote the development of an inclusive mental healthcare service network through:

- Providing resources and preferential policies to expand psychological counseling centers in localities, especially in areas with a high number of migrant workers.

- Encouraging public-private partnerships between counseling centers and businesses in industrial parks to provide workplace mental health support services.

- Integrating counseling services into public healthcare facilities such as commune/ward health stations or district-level hospitals, with a transgender-friendly orientation.

Thirdly, suggest psychology training institutions to integrate knowledge and skills in mental healthcare for transgender people and gender diverse individuals into their curriculum.

This will not only raise awareness among psychology students but also contribute to preparing a future workforce of professionals with the capacity and commitment to support vulnerable groups, while ensuring the quality of training aligns with real societal needs.

3.2. Recommendations for employer

To raise employers' awareness of gender and sexual diversity, to build mechanisms for reporting and handling complaints of gender-based stigma and discrimination:

Recommendation 05: Encourage businesses, organizations, and agencies to intergrate gender diversity, sexual orientation, and inclusive practices in human resources training and internal policies

This recommendation needs to ensure that factors of gender diversity and sexual orientation are formally included as an integral part of organizations' gender equality promotion policies. The objective is to raise awareness of gender and sexual diversity in order to reduce discrimination and prejudice against transgender people in corporate environments.

Recommendation 06: Establish and implement anonymous and confidential reporting mechanisms that are gender-sensitive, prioritizing the rights and safety of affected individuals while integrating community network support

To address barriers in receiving feedback and handling complaints, an important recommendation is to promote and implement anonymous reporting mechanisms that allow employees to provide information about stigmatizing issues or inappropriate behavior without revealing their identity, and they do not have to fear retaliation. These reporting mechanisms need to be established with strict security measures to ensure that information is protected and employees feel safe when reporting issues.

A typical example of an anonymous reporting model is the United Nations (UN) "Whistleblower Hotline" system. This model allows employees to report violations or misconduct without fear of their identity being discovered. This is an important tool to help international organizations ensure transparency and create a safe working environment where all individuals can speak up without retaliation.

Anonymous reporting mechanisms can be implemented in various forms, including anonymous email inboxes, anonymous reports, or the trauma reporting machine model as mentioned above. These methods are not complicated to implement, which can be adapted to the organization's conditions.

One model that businesses can refer to is from the IFC (International Finance Corporation), which includes 05 steps to build and operate a community-based grievance and feedback mechanism related to exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment[42]. It emphasizes the need to coordinate with community organizations to co-design the mechanismin a way that ensures appropriateness, accessibility, and confidentiality.

To improve welfare and develop economic support policies for transgender people:

As highlighted in the analysis of the correlation between the needs and income of transgender people, those requiring gender-affirming care often face difficulties in sustaining this process due to high costs and the potential need to combine multiple complex methods. Simultaneously, as the Gender Affirmation Law has not been passed, gender-affirming care is not covered by health insurance. Employers may consider developing specific benefit policies for their personnel to foster a better working environment for transgender employeest.

Recommendation 07: Establish specific welfare policies such as supplementary health insurance, financial assistance policies, and flexible leave policies for transgender employees

Corporations could create health insurance packages or financial assistance programs specifically for transgender employees, helping them cover medical services such as gender-affirming surgeries, hormone therapy, and other necessary medical or mental health interventions. This not only helps create an inclusive work environment but also helps attract and retain talent, while demonstrating the organization's commitment to the health and wellbeing of all employees.

In addition, companies can also adopt more flexible welfare policies to support transgender employees without necessarily covering all medical expenses. These benefits can be a broad policy covering all company employees or considered for high-contributing employees as a form of appreciation. Instead of covering all medical costs, companies can consider providing other benefits such as:

(1) Supplementary health insurance: Corporations can partner with insurance companies to provide supplementary health insurance for transgender employees, including specific medical services such as hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery, and other healthcare therapies. Corporations can offer transgender employees this insurance at a reasonable cost.

(2) Partial financial assistance: Corporations can provide grants or partial financial assistance to transgender employees throughout their transition process. This could include low-interest loans, medical subsidies, or partial funding programs for surgery costs.

(3) Flexible leave policy: To support the gender-affirming process, corporations can provide a flexible leave policy for transgender employees. This leave can include recovery time after surgery. This helps employees recover in the best possible conditions and return to work without prolonged interruptions. Benefits for visits and support for employees during this process can also be included.

Recommendation 08: Establish and develop psychological support and counseling programs for employees, especially transgender employees

Corporations need to develop internal counseling rooms/consultations to care for the mental health of employees, including transgender people. If there are already counseling rooms, the counseling staff

42 https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/ifc-communitybasedgrievancemechanism-toolkit.pdf

need to be trained with knowledge and skills about gender diversity to support employers in situations of stigma and violence. If it is not feasible to have a separate room for the purpose, a part-time specialist can be assigned in the human resources department. Corporations can also partner with psychological counseling service providers to ensure professionalism and cost-effectiveness.

3.3. Recommendations for community organizations and groups

Recommendations to develop job information channels, career guidance groups, and raise awareness of labor rights for transgender people and LGBTI community

Recommendation 09: Develop a transgender and LGBTI-friendly employment platform

It is necessary to build platform(s) to provide employment information for transgender people in particular and the LGBTI community in general. Simultaneously, it is encouraged to cooperate with recruitment channels, job boards, and corporations with better welfare policies and a friendly work culture to expand the networking and provide more job search leads. This helps create conditions for job seekers to provide feedback on the work environment, thereby promoting transparency and increasing diverse and inclusive employment opportunities. The following are recommended solutions for job platforms, but are not limited to:

A specialized website or social media page could be built for job information from businesses with gender equality policies. Here, collaboration with businesses committed to an inclusive work environment is important to regularly update recruitment information. Furthermore, collaborate with job platforms (e.g., TopCV, Vietnamworks, LinkedIn, etc.) to establish filters for businesses that have anti-discrimination policies, gender equality policies, and supportive and encouraging policies with benefits for transgender/LGBTI individuals.

Secondly, it is necessary to develop a networking mechanism which connects job seekers with LGBTI-friendly employers to support the application process and job referrals. Also important are forums and support groups where transgender people can share their experiences and get practical guidance on application processes and interview preparation.

Legal and psychological support needs to be ensured, such as on labor rights to help transgender people understand their rights and how to deal with stigma in the workplace, or to connect them with legal organizations to support cases of discrimination.

Besides the need for more relevant job information, the participants also wish to improve their professional and soft skills to better prepare for work. The analyses above show the gender stereotypes that transgender employees with a migrant background or high school graduation faced that limit their choices, and that they wish to develop skills for better income.

Recommendation 10: Establish career counseling and skills training programs for transgender people

Transgender community organizations, labor rights organizations, LGBT rights organizations, along with universities and vocational training centers, need to proactively research and coordinate the implementation of career guidance programs, vocational skills training, and soft skills training for

transgender people. It is highly necessary to prioritize the training and improvement of the educational level for transgender people in localities where community projects are non-existent or rare. These programs help to equip them for the labor market, while promoting self-confidence, adaptability, and sustainable career development opportunities for the community. The following are our proposed solutions:

First and foremost, a career mentor group from the community, which connects experienced transgender employees with job seekers. This community mentor group will be trained with career counseling skills to support the members in developing long-term career strategies.

Secondly, mobilizing for funding for training scholarships in various fields, such as technology, business, etc. that are relevant to the labor market. Financial support could be provided for transgender people to participate in professional training courses to increase their career opportunities. Here, the focus can be rather selective on those who truly have the need and ability to participate in training for scholarships. A monitoring and evaluation process is needed to provide timely support to participating members.

Recommendation 11: Enhance primary psychological support capabilities and build referral systems for mental healthcare services within the transgender community

Community-based organizations and peer groups need to be equipped with primary-level capacity in recognizing signs of psychological distress, providing initial support, as well as making timely referrals for cases requiring in-depth intervention to appropriate specialists. As accessible, safe, and highly trusted points of contact for transgender people, community groups hold a pivotal position within the grassroots mental health support system.

Enhancing this capacity will not only help the community respond more effectively to instances of psychological crisis but will also contribute to building a network of humane, flexible, and culturally and socially appropriate service connections. The government, development organizations, universities, and specialized service providers should support community groups through training programs, standardized guidance materials, and interdisciplinary coordination mechanisms to strengthen the community's role in a comprehensive mental healthcare ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

Research on the economic wellbeing of transgender people in Viet Nam has shown that the transgender community faces various challenges in finding employment, at the workplace, income, and in other economic activities. These difficulties mainly stem from stereotypical prejudices, an underdeveloped legal framework for protection, discrimination in the labor environment, along with a general lack of full awareness among employers and the community regarding rights and welfare of transgender people.

Major issues for transgender people are the difficulties in changing identification documents and the absense of policies to ensure a safe working environment. Furthermore, their income is often insufficient to cover gender-affirming healthcare. Consequently, it is difficult for them to save and invest in career development. In addition, access to healthcare and social support services remains very limited, mainly due to inadequate information awareness and persistent discrimination from service providers.

The research shows that with supportive policies – including an inclusive and respectful work environment towards gender and sexual diversity, along with vocational training programs – the economic wellbeing of transgender people can be significantly improved. Corporations and organizations need to be more aware of the diversity and rights of transgender people, implement specific support measures to minimize stigma, and create equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of their gender.

Corporate social responsibility lies in building a comprehensive welfare system, including supporting transgender workers in issues related to health, compensation, and promotion opportunities.

To improve the economic wellbeing of transgender people in Viet Nam, close coordination is needed between improving the policy and legal system, including legal gender recognition, adjusting the price framework for hormones and gender-affirming medical interventions, along with the active participation of businesses, labor rights organizations, community organizations, and transgender rights organizations. Measures such as strengthening education and training on gender diversity, improving access to healthcare services, and protecting the labor rights of transgender people will contribute to building a more just society where every individual can develop and benefit from social welfare.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 01: Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology

1.1. Quantitative Method

The survey questionnaire was developed to with the following content:

- Demographic and Socio-economic Information: Collecting data on gender identity, level of medical intervention, disclosure status, disability status, and migration status of transgender people.

- Occupation and Type of Enterprise: Understanding the occupations and types of enterprises in which transgender people primarily work.

- Unemployment Rate and Income: Investigating the unemployment situation within the transgender community and the average income in 2023; Correlation between personal characteristics and work environment: Surveying the stigma and discrimination that transgender people experience in the workplace, as well as the feedback and handling mechanisms of organizations or employers.

1.2 Qualitative Method

The in-depth interview and focus group discussion guides for transgender participants include the following topics:

- Experiences of Rejection/Acceptance in accessing employment and changes after medical intervention: Describing experiences of rejection or acceptance in accessing employment, and changes for individuals who have undergone medical interventions.

- Impact on economic wellbeing: Examining the impact of job rejection or acceptance on their economic wellbeing.

- Experiences of stigma and discrimination in the workplace and reactions: Describing stigma and discrimination in the workplace, including factors such as time, the person(s) who cause harm, and their reactions.

- Impact on economic wellbeing from stigma and discrimination: Assessing the impact of stigma and discrimination on economic wellbeing.

- Views on legal gender recognition: Gathering views on legal gender recognition and the risk of stigma in accessing employment.

- Impact of average income: Exploring how income affects living conditions and needs, as well as barriers to increasing income.

- Support after experiencing stigma and discrimination: Identifying the support for transgender individuals after experiencing stigma and discrimination.

- Needs and recommendations regarding gender affirmation law and labor policies: Taking into consideration the needs and recommendations regarding future gender affirmation policies and laws.

The in-depth interview guide for employer representatives includes the following topics:

- Views of Companies/Enterprises on LGBTI Inclusion: Exploring views on an inclusive environment for LGBTI people, especially transgender people.

- Company Anti-Stigma and Anti-Discrimination Policies: Detailing policies to prevent stigma against transgender people.

- Business Awareness of Government Anti-Discrimination Policies: Assessing awareness of government policies.

- Barriers to Policy Development: Identifying challenges in developing anti-stigma and anti-discrimination policies.

Needs and recommendations of corporations to the government: Gathering recommendations from corporations to the government on policies to support the development of complaint resolution mechanisms.

Appendix 02: Online Survey Questionnaire

GENERAL INFORMATION

About the Research

You are invited to participate in a survey as part of the research: "Assessing the Economic Wellbeing of Transgender People in Viet Nam." This research is financially supported by UNDP.

Currently in Viet Nam, there is no comprehensive database on transgender people and the challenges related to economic wellbeing that they face. It is estimated that the number of transgender people in Viet Nam ranges from 300,000 to 500,000 (based on the ratio provided by the World Health Organization report). This community is assessed as facing higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and financial instability compared to cisgender people, according to existing, albeit limited, documents.

In the context that transgender people in Viet Nam face many challenges in accessing employment as well as in the workplace, including stigma and discrimination and existing information gaps, IT'S T TIME is conducting this research to:

• Measure the level of stigma and discrimination that transgender people face in employment and the impacts of these experiences on their health, social wellbeing, and economic wellbeing.

• Identify the coping strategies and help-seeking behaviors that transgender people use to deal with discrimination and its social, economic, and health impacts during job seeking and in the workplace, as well as the effectiveness of these strategies.

• Identify the protective and risk factors of businesses related to diversity and inclusion policies and their implementation in the labor sector.

• Provide recommendations to promote policies related to gender recognition laws, labor rights, and gender equality.

About IT'S T TIME

IT'S T TIME, an organization founded and led by transgender individuals, works to enhance the autonomy and effective participation of their community in policy advocacy and raise social awareness to ensure the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of transgender and gender diverse people in Viet Nam. Currently, IT'S T TIME is actively supporting the drafting committee in the process of developing the Law on Gender Transition.

Why are You invited to participate in this survey?

If You are 18 years of age or older, a Vietnamese citizen, and identify as transgender (having a gender identity different from the sex assigned at birth), you are fully eligible to participate in answering this survey and research.

We respectfully invite you to participate in this research as a representative of the transgender community in Viet Nam, to share your experiences and perspectives.

What will happen if You participate in this survey?

This is not a test, so you do not need to worry about answering it right or wrong answers. Please choose the options that best suit your opinions or experiences. After completing each page, you can click "Next" to move to the next page. When you have answered all the questions, click "Submit" to complete the survey. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire is approximately 30 minutes.

Privacy and Data Security

The information you provide will only be used for the purpose of analysis and for the research report. The results will be presented in an anonymized format to not reveal the identity of the participants. We are committed to protecting your personal information in accordance with the Vietnamese law.

What are the benefits of participating in the survey?

Your contributions will help promote a safer and more respectful working environment for transgender workers.

After completion of the survey, we would like to offer you a support amount of VND 100,000. In case you completed the survey and introduce it to other potential participants, you will receive VND 50,000 for each referred person who completes the survey (up to 02 people).

Risks of participation

Participation is voluntary. You can refuse or stop participating at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and you will not face any negative consequences. We are committed to ensuring your privacy and data security.

How can you find out what happens with this research?

The survey results will be presented in the research report, which will be published on IT'S T TIME channels and our partners' platforms.

Contact details for further information

If you have any questions or contributions to the survey or research, please feel free to contact us:

Mr. Nguyen Quoc Anh - Research Team Lead

Email: quocanh.itt@gmail.com

Phone number: 0977 682 627

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

1. I have read the information sheet about the research.

2. I understand why I have been invited to participate in this research.

3. I understand that I can stop participating at any time and that I do not have to answer any questions if I do not want to.

4. I am clear about my rights when participating in the research.

5. I have had the opportunity to ask about the research information, and my questions have been answered satisfactorily.

6. I understand that the information I provide is useful for the research and the community and will be kept confidential in accordance with the law.

7. I am willing to participate in this research.

Do you agree to participate in the survey?

Yes No

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

	Question	Answer/ Options	Notes
1	What is your year of birth?		
2	What was your sex assigned at birth (on legal documents)?	1. Male 2. Female	
3	What is your self-identified gender identity?	1. Transgender Male (assigned Female at birth but identifies/wishes to be Male) 2. Transgender Female (assigned Male at birth but identifies/wishes to be Female) 3. Non-binary 4. Other (End the interview if the respondent chooses a gender identity not within the research criteria)	(End the interview if the respondent selects an identity outside the study criteria)
4	Are you intersex?	1. Yes 2. No	
5	How often would you come out about your gender identity?	1. Completely secret, not open 2. Very rarely open up about it 3. Sometimes, occasionally open up 4. Mostly open in most cases and situations 5. Always, completely open and public	
6	What is your current level of medical transition?	1. Fully transitioned surgically (both chest and genitals) 2. Had chest surgery (top surgery) 3. Had genital surgery (bottom surgery) 4. No surgery, only using hormones 5. No surgery, not using hormones 6. Had gonadectomy (removal of uterus, ovaries, testicles) 7. Other (please specify)	
7	To what extent have you made social changes to affirm your gender identity?	1. Change your name (on birth certificate/national ID card) 2. Change your pronouns (in daily communication) 3. Change your style of dress, appearance 4. Change your gender expression (behavior, roles, gestures) 5. Haven't thought about it 6. Other (please specify)	
8	Your current place of residence:	Name of the province/city	
9	Is your current residence urban or rural?	1. Urban/city 2. Suburban, town, district capital 3. Rural	
10	Migration status	1. Born and raised in the current place of residence 2. Lived in the current place for 5 years or more 3. Lived in the current place for less than 5 years	

11	What is your ethnicity?	Write your answer	
12	What is your current relationship status?	a. Single b. In a romantic relationship c. Cohabiting with partner (not legally recognized) d. Legally married	
13	What is your highest level of education?	1. Did not attend school/ complete primary school 2. Primary school 3. Lower secondary school 4. Upper secondary school 5. Vocational training, vocational school 6. College, University 7. Postgraduate 8. Other (Please specify)	
14	What is your disability status? (Multiple answers can be selected)	1. No disability 2. Prefer not to say 3. Mobility impairment 4. Hearing and speech impairment 5. Visual impairment 6. Neurological, mental health disability 7. Intellectual disability 8. Other disability (Please specify)	
15	Are you currently a member of any self-help groups/ organizations of the Transgender or LGBI community?	1. Yes (Please list a few groups you regularly follow/ participate) 2. No -> please proceed to the next section	
16	For how long have you been/ are you participating in the group(s)?	1. Less than 06 months 2. From 6 - 12 months 3. Between 1-2 Years 4. Between 2-4 Years 5. Between 4-10 Years 6. More than 10 Years	
17	What are the main areas of activity of the group(s)? (Mark all applicable options)	1. Healthcare specifically for transgender people 2. Raising awareness and education on transgender health 3. Enhancing policy advocacy capacity, community outreach 4. Connecting the transgender community in the region 5. Connecting the transgender community nationwide 6. Information on job opportunities 7. I don't know 8. Other (please specify)	

B. INFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

In this section, we will talk about your current job.

	Câu hỏi	Lựa chọn	Ghi chú
1	What is your current main employment status?	1. Full-time paid employment 2. Part-time paid employment 3. Self-employed 4. Unemployed but looking for work 5. Unemployed and not looking for work 6. Unable to work 7. Other (please specify)	
2	How many income-generating jobs do you currently have?	1. 1 job 2. 2 jobs 3. 3 jobs 4. Other (please specify)	
3	In which industry does your current main (income-generating) job belong to?	1. Management level (CEO, managers in Service, Retail, and other sectors) 2. Specialized fields (Science, Technology, Medicine, Law, and Education) 3. Business owner (retail, small business, service, or other types) 4. Office staff, clerical (secretary, administrative, receptionist) 5. Sex work (sex labor, online sex work, working at strip clubs, adult film industry) 6. Entertainment industry (singing, performing) 7. Fashion industry, fashion design, fashion business 8. Beauty industry: makeup artist, hairstylist, beauty salon 9. Non-profit organization staff, community organization staff 10. State agency 11. Factory/Industrial park worker 12. Farmer/Agriculture sector 13. Military 14. Other (please specify)	
4	Can you specify your exact job title?		

5	Among the jobs you are doing, which one do you spend the most time on?	1. Management level (CEO, managers in Service, Retail, and other sectors) 2. Specialized fields (Science, Technology, Medicine, Law, and Education) 3. Business owner (retail, small business, service, or other types) 4. Office staff, clerical (secretary, administrative, receptionist) 5. Sex work (sex labor, online sex work, working at strip clubs, adult film industry) 6. Entertainment industry (singing, performing) 7. Fashion industry, fashion design, fashion business 8. Beauty industry: makeup artist, hairstylist, beauty salon 9. Non-profit organization staff, community organization staff 10. State agency 11. Factory/Industrial park worker 12. Farmer/Agriculture sector 13. Military 14. Other (please specify)	
6	To which of the following types does your employer (hiring entity) belong?	1. Self-employed, freelance 2. Household 3. Private enterprise 4. Limited liability company, partnership company, joint-stock company (domestic) 5. State agency 6. Non-profit organization, community organization 7. Foreign, international company/organization	
7	How frequently are you paid (from your main job)?	1. Daily 2. Weekly 3. Monthly 4. Every two months or longer 5. Other (specify):.....	
8	What was your average monthly income in the past 12 months? (unit: VND)		
9	Are you satisfied with your current job?	1. I am completely satisfied with my current job 2. I am only somewhat satisfied with my current job 3. I am not satisfied with my current job	Yes -> skip to the next part (C)
10	If you are not satisfied with your job, specifically due to which reasons? (multiple answers can be selected)	1. The job does not align with your personal wishes and interests 2. The job does not match your skills 3. Facilities 4. Benefits 5. Salary level 6. Work environment 7. Other (please specify)	

11	What policies do you benefit from at your current company or organization? (Mark all applicable options)	a. A labor contract/probation contract b. Social insurance c. Regular health check-ups d. Holidays and leave according to legal regulations e. Maternity leave f. Retirement benefits g. Other (please specify)	
12	What kinds of work/ occupations do you want to do?	Answer briefly:	

C. EXPERIENCES IN JOB SEARCH AND ACCESS

In this section, please recall your experiences in searching for job opportunities and the recruitment processes you have gone through.

	Câu hỏi	Lựa chọn	Ghi chú
1		1. Job portals 2. Social media 3. Through friends' introductions 4. Advertisements 5. Other (please specify) 6. Never searched for a job	If the answer is number 6 "Never searched for a job" – the section ends
2	Through which information channels have you searched for jobs?	a. When the job is recommended by other transgender and LGBTI people b. Attractive compensation and salary c. Employee-benefit oriented work environment and culture d. The job aligns with your aspirations and career orientation e. The job aligns with your skills and time availability f. Other (please specify)	Checkbox
3	In your assessment, are the job opportunities in your field of expertise common and easily accessible to you?	1. Many opportunities, job information readily available and easily accessible 2. Opportunities and information exist but are limited 3. Few opportunities and limited information to access	
4	If you feel there is limited access to job opportunities, what specifically are they? (multiple answers can be selected)	1. Not many channels provide job information suitable for transgender people 2. Unsuitable recruitment requirements, difficult for transgender people to meet 3. Channels for transgender people have few or no job opportunity postings 4. Other (please specify)	

5	Can you list the job information sources you can access? (multiple answers can be selected)	1. Job websites (vietnamworks, navigos, ...) 2. Social media, job search groups 3. Newspapers 4. Employment centers, job brokers 5. Friends, relatives 6. Community groups, LGBTI community organizations 7. Other (please specify)	
6	What difficulties or challenges did you encounter during your job search?	1. Preparing application documents (CV, resume, ...) 2. Writing cover letters, job applications 3. Submitting applications, application procedures 4. Searching for recruitment information 5. Commuting, transportation 6. Direct interviews with employers 7. Entrance exams 8. No difficulties or challenges 9. Other (please specify)	
7	In the past 24 months, while searching for and accessing employment, have you ever experienced the following because you are transgender?	1. Being misnamed, misgendered 2. Being denied a job, refused recruitment 3. Being suggested to change appearance, way of dressing 4. Being verbally insulted 5. Excessive curiosity about personal matters 6. Specific needs not being paid attention to 7. Hearing or witnessing negative behaviors from the recruitment team or employees of the recruiting company 8. Other (Please specify)	
8	Have you ever felt you were not treated fairly and with respect during the job search and application process?	1. I always felt I was treated fairly 2. Sometimes I felt I was not treated fairly 3. I have never felt I was treated fairly during the job search and application process	If the answer is number 1 -> skip to section D
9	If you have ever felt unfairly treated during the job search and application process, what specific experiences were they?	1. Being discriminated against, isolated during the recruitment process 2. Being harassed by the recruiter 3. Intentional misuse of pronouns, preferred name during the recruitment process 4. Physical or psychological violence 5. Sexual harassment 6. Being denied a job 7. Reduced salary, reduced benefits 8. Other (Please specify)	

10	When you encountered unfair or disrespectful treatment during recruitment as mentioned above, what did you do?	1. Did nothing, endured, ignored, continued to apply and go through the recruitment process 2. Gave up, looked for job opportunities elsewhere 3. Complained to the company/ recruiter 4. Reported to authorities, filed a lawsuit 5. Talked to friends, shared, sought support 6. Documented and shared your experience on social media 7. Other (please specify)	
11	Bạn có biết những kênh, nguồn thông tin nào về việc làm hỗ trợ, ưu tiên cho người chuyển giới?	1. Did not believe feedback would be effective 2. Did not have the financial means to follow up 3. Lacked motivation, did not feel safe 4. Did not have sufficient health (physical, mental) to follow up 5. Did not have time 6. Lacked sufficient information 7. Other (please specify)	
12	If you shared or reported, was your issue resolved or did you receive feedback?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know/unclear	
13	What was the resolution?	1. Received information, acknowledged the issue 2. Organized investigation, verification of the issue 3. Provided feedback, stated conclusions and handling measures 4. Did not provide further feedback 5. Other (Please specify)	
14	Are you satisfied with the feedback or resolution received?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Unclear	
15	Do you know of any channels or sources of job information that support or prioritize transgender people?	1. Do not know, have not heard of 2. Yes (Please specify)	

D. WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES

In this section, let's talk about your experiences with the work environment and relationships at your current job.

	Question	Answer/ Options	Notes
1	Does your workplace have any transgender-friendly characteristics or policies?	a. Yes -> go to D2 b. No -> go to D3	
2	What are those transgender-friendly characteristics or policies? (You can select more than one option)	1. Anti-stigma, anti-discrimination, anti-violence (towards transgender people, LGBTI) 2. Anti-sexual harassment, anti-assault 3. Information confidentiality 4. Specific accommodations (gender-neutral restrooms, uniform choices, leave after surgery...) 5. Other (please specify)	
3	In what ways do you feel or experience difficulties when discussing work?	1. Direct communication with colleagues 2. Direct communication in groups, meetings 3. Email 4. Chat, messages (e.g., Zalo, Messenger, Teams, etc.) 5. Other (Please specify) 6. Do not feel or experience difficulties	
4	With whom do you feel difficulties in work-related communication?	1. Colleagues 2. Subordinates 3. Superiors 4. Customers, partners 5. Other (Please specify) 6. Do not feel or experience difficulties	
5	Can you briefly share why you feel difficulties in communication with them?	Please specify:	
6	Do you feel that you are treated fairly and with respect in the workplace?	1. I am always treated fairly and with respect in my workplace 2. Sometimes I feel I am not treated fairly and with respect in my workplace 3. I always feel I am not treated fairly and with respect in my workplace	If the answer is number 1 -> skip to section F. End
7	In which of the following areas do you feel you are not treated fairly and with respect?	1. Communication, relationships with colleagues, superiors 2. Communication, relationships with superiors 3. Regarding appearance, gestures, voice 4. Regarding attire, way of dressing 5. Regarding welfare benefits, rights at the workplace 6. Regarding salary, bonuses 7. Promotion at work 8. Documents, procedures 9. Regarding employee management, personnel issues 10. Other (please specify)	

8	In the past 12 months, have you experienced any of the following?	1. Physical violence 2. Verbal violence 3. Psychological violence 4. Sexual violence 5. No experience	If you have no experience, skip to question 15
9	When was the most recent time you experienced the situation mentioned above?	1. Within 1 week 2. 2 weeks ago 3. 1 month ago 4. 3 months ago 5. 6 months ago 6. 1 year ago or longer	
10	How often do the above experiences happen to you?	1. Always, frequently 2. Many times 3. Sometimes, a few times 4. It happened, but not often	
11	When the above situations happened to you, how did you react?	1. Stay silent, accept and/ or ignore it 2. Question yourself for not doing well enough 3. Express your opinions directly to protect yourself 4. Document the incident 5. Report to the superiors and/ or HR 6. Seek support from the labor union or worker protection organization 7. File a complaint, seek legal support 8. Share with your friends, acquaintances, trusted people for support 9. Posted about the issue on social media 10. Did not know what to do 11. Decide to quit 12. Other (please specify)	
12	If you chose to stay silent, ignore, or had no reaction, what was the reason?	1. Do not believe that giving feedback would make sense 2. Do not have the financial means to follow up 3. Lack motivation, do not feel safe 4. Do not have sufficient health (physical, mental) to follow up 5. Do not have time to follow up 6. Lack sufficient information 7. Other (please specify)	

13	How did your company react or handle the reported incidents?	1. Receive, acknowledge the report 2. Open internal investigations 3. Implement measures to protect the reporter 4. Discipline or warn the person with discriminatory behavior 5. Organize training sessions on the working environment 6. Improve policies and procedures 7. Conceal information 8. Took no action 9. Other (please specify)	
14	How did the above situations affect you emotionally- mentally, also your work motivation?	1. Feel hurt and offended 2. Feel your self-worth and confidence diminished 3. Scared 4. Angry 5. Lose your work motivation, do not want to continue working 6. Do not care and pay attention to those issues 7. Other (please specify)	
15	Does your workplace have specific regulations or policies to address these issues?	1. No 2. I do not know 3. Yes (please specify)	
16	What support resources are available to help you address issues of stigma and discrimination in the workplace?	1. Colleagues 2. Superiors 3. Labor union 4. HR 5. Other (please specify)	
17	Are you satisfied with the current efforts of your workplace leaders in protecting employees from gender identity-related discrimination?	1. I am very satisfied 2. Somewhat satisfied 3. Neutral 4. Not very satisfied 5. Very dissatisfied	
18	Can you share an example of a situation where you felt respected, supported, and protected in your workplace?	Share the example	
19	Do you feel that your contributions at work are recognized and appreciated by your colleagues and superiors?	1. Yes, always 2. Yes, most of the time 3. Rarely 4. Never	

E. Impact on Physical and Mental Health, Quality of Life, and Your Recommendations

	Question	Answer/ Options	Notes
1	How have experiences of stigma, discrimination, or violence in the workplace environment affected your mental health? (Select all that apply)	a. Constant stress b. Anxiety or panic attacks c. Depression d. Insomnia or difficulty sleeping e. Other (please specify)	
2	Have you experienced any physical health problems caused by the negative experiences mentioned above?	a. Frequent headaches b. Uncontrolled weight gain/loss c. Illness or general health decline d. Other (please specify)	
3	Do you feel you need support from a mental health or medical professional after these experiences?	a. Yes b. No	
4	Have workplace stigma and discrimination issues affected some aspects of your daily life? (Select all that apply)	a. Personal relationships b. Your ability to concentrate and work c. Financial capacity d. You feel more isolated and/ or detached e. Other (please specify)	
5	Have you ever thought about leaving your job or changing careers due to negative experiences at work?	a. Yes b. No	
6	Did you receive support from your workplace after reporting stigma or discrimination?		
7	What support do you think should be provided for transgender people in the workplace? (Select all that apply)	a. Counseling and psychological support programs b. Comprehensive anti-discrimination policies c. Diversity and inclusion training for employees d. Building a safe and respectful work environment e. Other (Please share more details about the support you choose)	
8	What recommendations do you have for improving the working environment for transgender people?		

F. END

	Câu hỏi	Lựa chọn	Ghi chú
1	Please enter your National ID card number (This information is used for research purposes only, for the Payment of Support for Survey Participants. It is kept completely confidential)	Enter information	
2	Please enter the National ID card number of the person who referred you to participate in the survey (if any). (This information is used for research purposes only, for the Payment of Support for Survey Participants. It is kept completely confidential)	Enter information	
3	Please enter your bank account information (Beneficiary Name - Account Number - Bank Name) or phone number to receive support upon completion of the survey.	Enter information	
4	Do you want to refer this research to 02 other transgender people?	1. Yes (If yes, please share your National ID card number with the referred person and remind them to fill in the information in question 2 of this section as a basis for receiving support) 2. No	

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 03: In-depth Interview for Transgender People

Introduction and Commitment to Informed Consent

Issues of employment and income are important for everyone. Due to social prejudice and sometimes the lack of appropriate identification documents, transgender people may face difficulties and discrimination in recruitment and employment. To gather information about the recruitment and employment of transgender people and thereby make relevant recommendations to ensure fairness for transgender people, It's T Time is conducting research on Assessing the Economic Wellbeing of Transgender People in Viet Nam. This research is financially supported by UNDP.

The discussion will take approximately 60 minutes. You can stop participating at any time you wish and can skip any questions you feel uncomfortable sharing. Not participating in the research will not have any negative impact on you.

To support your participation in this research, we would like to offer you VND 300,000 (in words: Three hundred thousand VND) for your travel and time spent participating in the discussion.

For the purpose of documentation, we would like to ask for your permission to record this discussion. We will not include your real name, address, or any information that could identify you in the transcription. The audio recording and transcription will be kept secure, and only the researchers will have access to them. We will only use the information collected for research purposes. Quotes will be anonymized or use pseudonyms.

Do you agree to participate in the discussion and to be recorded?

a. Yes b. No

A. General Information:

1. Preferred name to use during the discussion

2. Age:

3. Hometown:

4. Current residence (if different from hometown, ask about their migration background):

5. Education (highest level, field of study):

6. Gender identity: what gender and if there are any gender-affirming care has been/is undertaken:

7. Relationship status:

8. Disability status:

B. Connection, Sharing, Support:

1. What channels do you usually use to look for job opportunities? Which channel provides the most suitable opportunities for you? Why?

2. Do you participate in any groups or networks for transgender people? How do they support you to find work? Do you expect anything else from them?

2.1. Are there any transgender group or network that you are currently involved in? What motivated you to join them? What do the members exchange or support each other with? How satisfied are you with

the support/ dynamics in the group?

2.2. How have these groups/networks supported you in your job search or employment? How do you assess the effectiveness of this support? What do they do well? Is there anything you wish this group could do that it doesn't? In your opinion, why haven't they been able to do these things?

C. Recruitment Process:

1. Please describe the process from when you received the job information until you were hired for the current job?

1.1. How is your current job? (what do you do, what made you choose this job, income, satisfaction, difficulties) 1.2. How was the recruitment? (job application and recruitment process, difficulties, how did you overcome them)

1.3. Recruiting agency (private/

governmental, which sector, size of the business)

1.4. What made you approach this employer (or previous employers)? Did you learn about their attitude towards LGBTI people before applying? How did you research that? If you didn't inquire about this factor, what made you not consider this factor when applying for a job?

2. How would you assess the impact of you being a transgender person when applying for your current job? (What advantages or disadvantages did your transgender identity create when you applied for the job?)

2.1. Self-assessment of your competitiveness in the current labor market? (strengths, challenges)

2.2. What role does being a transgender person play in your competitiveness in the labor market? (explain the reasons for your assessment)

3. Looking back at the recruitment process, are you satisfied with it? Why?

3.1. Satisfaction with the recruitment process (level of satisfaction, explain the reasons for this level of satisfaction)

3.2. Stigma and discrimination in recruitment (feelings about being stigmatized and discriminated against during the recruitment process, what did you do about it, results)

4. Past experiences in the recruitment process (please describe the negative experiences in detail if there are any, including time, course of events, your reaction, results)

D. Work Experience:

1. How comfortable are you with your current workplace? (if you have had many jobs, compare your current work environment with previous ones, Suggest further exploration of the reasons for leaving previous jobs (e.g., how did stigma/being transgender affect the decision to leave?))

2.What benefits do you receive while working here? Are you satisfied with what the company has done for you? Why?

3. Are you satisfied with your current salary? Please assess based on your abilities and the needs for your current living standards?

3.1. If possible, could you tell me about your monthly income?

3.2. How suitable/worthy is this income for your work/effort/abilities?

3.3. What percentage of your living needs does this income currently meet?

3.4. If your income does not meet your needs, please specify: what needs are currently unmet by this income?

3.5. What have you done about these needs?

3.6. Self-assessment of your abilities at work? (ability to complete tasks, ensure quality of work)
3.7. What role does being a transgender person play in how the company assesses your abilities and implements promotions or pays you?

4. While working, have you ever felt disadvantaged or prioritized because you are transgender? Please describe the incident in detail: how you fought/reported it, frequency, process, feedback from the company/employer, supporter, results, etc.

5. What policies does the company have to combat discrimination and harassment, violence at the company (e.g., gender equality policy, respect for diversity, policy on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, hotline for reporting stigma, discrimination, violence, appropriate ways for managers to listen to employees' needs/feedback...)? How effective do you think this policy is? If the participant is unaware of these policies, ask why: what makes you think it's not necessary to find out this information?

6. How have experiences of disadvantage or prioritization affected you? (Focus on exploring the impacts on work motivation, level of retention/focus at work, financial capacity, physical and mental health, work relationships and social life, etc.)

7. What is the attitude of those around you towards you?

7.1. What is the attitude of your manager and colleagues towards you? (expressions of support/help, stigma/discrimination)

7.2. What is the attitude of customers/partners? (expressions of support/help, stigma/discrimination)

8. When you go to work, what is the most important factor for you to decide to work there? Does the company having a policy of respecting and including gender and sexual diversity affect your decision to work there? Why (even if the participant says this doesn't affect them or isn't important, ask why they think so)?

9. In your opinion, how does your education affect your current job? If you were not a transgender person, would your educational and employment opportunities be different?

E. Recommendations

1. What advice do you have for other transgender people regarding applying for and doing work?

2. What do you expect from transgender people's groups/networks to increase job opportunities and provide more effective support for transgender people?

3. What are your expectations for organizations/companies regarding fair recruitment of transgender people?

4. What skills do you want to improve to better participate in the labor market? What skills do you want to improve to better cope with stigma and discrimination?

5. What advice would you give to yourself?

Appendix 04: Focus Group Interview

Issues of employment and income are important for everyone. Due to social prejudice and sometimes the lack of appropriate identification documents, transgender people may face difficulties and discrimination in recruitment and employment. To gather information about the recruitment and employment of transgender people and thereby make relevant recommendations to ensure fairness for transgender people, It's T Time is conducting research on Assessing the Economic wellbeing of transgender people in Viet Nam. This research is financially supported by UNDP.

The discussion will take approximately 60 minutes. You can stop participating at any time you wish and can skip any questions you feel uncomfortable sharing. Not participating in the research will not have any negative impact on you.

To support your participation in this research, we would like to offer you VND 300,000 (in words: Three hundred thousand VND) for your travel and time spent participating in the discussion.

For the purpose of documentation, we would like to ask for your permission to record this discussion. We will not include your real name, address, or any information that could identify you in the transcription. The audio recording and transcription will be kept secure, and only the researchers will have access to them. We will only use the information collected for research purposes. Quotes will be anonymized or use pseudonyms.

Do you agree to participate in the discussion and to be recorded?

a. Yes b. No

A. General Information

1. Preferred name to use during the discussion

2. Pronouns:

B. Issues in the Job Seeking Process:

1. How do you look for job opportunities?

- What are your criteria when looking for a job?

- What channels do you use?

- How is the job seeking process for you, easy or difficult? If difficult, is there anything you would like to change?

2. Do you receive support from the LGBTI/Transgender community groups in the job search?

- What types of support have you received?

- Was it helpful?

- Regarding the urgency of the support - Did you receive the support immediately and timely?

C. Recruitment Process

1. Once you received interview information, what did you prepare for it?

- How do you consider clothing? Would a company that is too strict about dress code make you uncomfortable?

- What kind of space would make you feel comfortable?

- Have you ever had a group interview with other candidates? How did you feel? (any concern about performance or expertise...)

- Does the attitude of the recruiter affect you at al

2. How would you assess the impact of you being a transgender person when applying for your current job? (What advantages or disadvantages did your transgender identity create when you applied for the job?)

- Self-assessment of your competitiveness in the current labor market? (strengths, challenges)

- What role does being a transgender person play in your competitiveness in the labor market? (can you please also explain the reasons for your assessment)

3. Take a moment to reflect on your previous interview experiences, could be for a job, or not. What behaviors would make you uncomfortable when participating in an interview?

- What behavior makes you feel unsafe?

- What is the role of the recruiter during these moments?

- Have you ever had an unsafe or stigmatizing experience? What did you do then?

- If you were to participate in a new job interview, what do you think you would do to improve your advantages?

D. Working Experiences

1. In your opinion, what is a good company policy like?

- What are the basic policies for everyone?

- Especially for individuals belonging to the transgender community, are there any additional specific policies needed?

- What policies at your current workplace make you feel satisfied?

2. Are you satisfied with your current salary? Please assess it based on your abilities, needs, and your current living standards?

- Does your current salary match your abilities and position?

- Does it meet your basic needs? (food, shelter, transportation, ...)

- Do you have other needs that your current salary cannot cover? (travel, buying a computer, ...)

- Are you able to save an amount that makes you feel secure?

3. Do you feel that being a transgender person affect your promotion opportunities and income?

4. Have you ever felt disadvantaged or prioritized because you are transgender? Please describe in

detail: how you dealt with it/reported it, frequency, process, feedback from the company/employer, supporter, results, etc.

5. What is the most important factor for you to decide whether to work at a place? In case the company has an inclusive policy of respecting gender and sexual diversity, does this affect your decision? Why? (Even if the participant says that this factor does not affect them or is not important, the interviewer is suggested to ask for the reason)

6. How does your education affect your current occupation? If you were not a transgender person, how different would your educational and employment opportunities be?

7. How does the attitude of those around you affect how you express yourself at work?

- In your opinion, what is it like to be friendly with transgender people?

- What is it like to be discriminatory against transgender people at work?

- Can you please share a personal story of yours?

E. Recommendations

1. What advice do you have for other transgender people regarding job application and employment?

2. What do you expect from groups and networks of/ for transgender people to increase job opportunities and provide more effective support?

3. What are your expectations for organizations/ companies regarding fair recruitment towards transgender people?

4. What skills do you want to improve to better participate in the labor market? What skills do you want to improve to better cope with stigma and discrimination?

5. What advice would you give to yourself?

Appendix 05: Interview Guide for Employer Representatives

Basic Information, Awareness, and General Commitment

1. Please provide information about the type of organization/company, its operating sector, and the number of employees?

2. How would you describe gender diversity within your organization? Approximately how many employees in your organization identify as transgender?

3. What does gender equality mean to you and your organization?

4. Can you describe your organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion, particularly for transgender employees?

Policies and Practices

5. What specific policies do you have in place to protect transgender employees from discrimination?

6. Has your organization recorded any cases of transgender employees experiencing stigma or discrimination? How do you enforce these policies, and what procedures are in place for reporting violations?

7. Do you regularly review and update your anti-discrimination policies? Please describe the most recent updates. What were the reasons for those changes? What significance did those changes/ updates bring?

Training and Education

8. What training programs does your organization provide to educate employees on issues of gender and sexual diversity? What is the frequency of these training sessions? Who are the partners providing this training?

9. How do you measure the effectiveness of these training programs?

Support Systems

10. What resources or support systems are available for transgender employees (e.g., counseling, support groups)?

11. Do you have mentoring or advocacy programs specifically for LGBTI employees?

Recruitment and Retention

12. How do you view transgender individuals in the labor market? Are they a target group for your organization's recruitment?

13. How do you ensure that your recruitment process is inclusive of transgender candidates?

14. What strategies do you use to retain transgender employees, and how do you evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies?

Organizational Culture

15. How would you describe your organizational culture in regard to inclusion for transgender people?

16. How do you solicit and integrate feedback from employees about their experiences related to gender identity?

Responding to Challenges

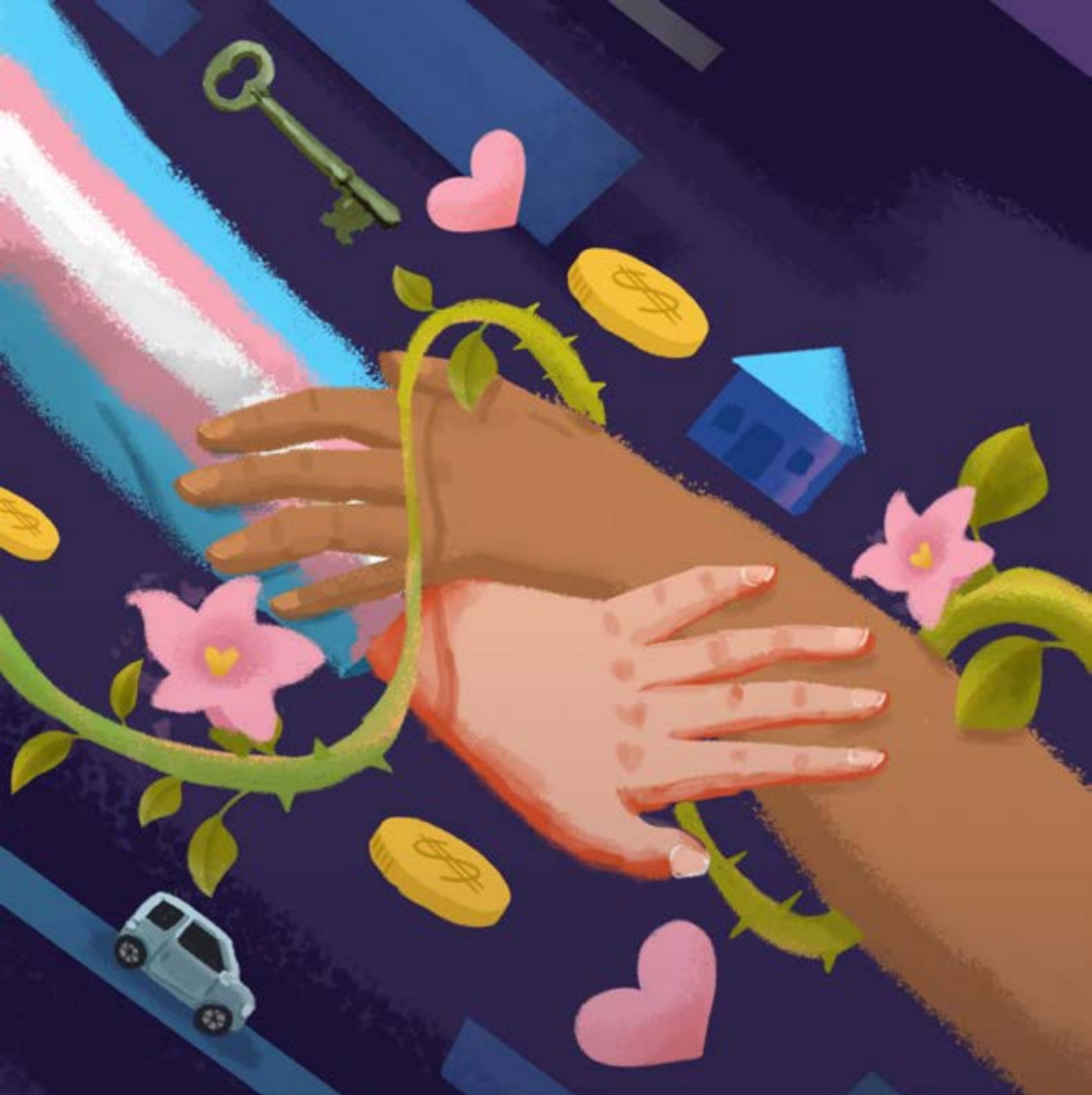
17. Can you share examples of how your organization has addressed challenges related to the inclusion of transgender people?

18. How do you respond to incidents of discrimination or harassment against transgender employees?

Future Goals

19. What initiatives do you plan to further improve the equality for transgender employees in your workplace? Can you please describe your vision for transgender employees over the next 5 years?

20, Do you have any recommendations for state labor management offices to facilitate or create a legal framework for companies to ensure equal policies and mechanisms for handling cases of discrimination, stigma, or harassment?



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