



## SURVEY ON QUALITY OF LIFE AND SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG TRANSGENDERS

Shalini L

**ABSTRACT** *Background:* Transgender are the most marginalized and vulnerable or excluded population in India. They experience the unique barriers when accessing public or private health services starting with a lack of understanding of their needs and problems[1]. Very limited number of studies had been conducted in this population. Therefore the present study had focused on the social anxiety of transgender.

*Methods:* This study is a cross sectional study using mixed method research design aimed to find out level of social anxiety and quality of life among transgender and find co relationship between social anxiety and quality of life. This study used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect the data. 25 participants were selected using purposive sampling technique. In depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted. Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation (BFNE) Scale (Watson & Friend, 1969) and WHOQOL-Bref (Whoqol Group, 1995) was used for data collection.

*Results and implications:* The results indicated a high level of social anxiety and low level of quality of life of the transgender individuals in the current life situation. Multidimensional Therapy is essential to develop Quality of Life of these individual.

**KEYWORDS :** Transgender, Social Anxiety, Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation, Quality of Life.

### Introduction:

Transgender persons who lives whole heartedly or partially in their gender role opposite to the one in which they were born. Gender is a term that is refer to ways that people act, or feel about themselves, which is associated with boys/men and girls/women. While aspects of biological sex are the same across different cultures, aspects of gender may not be. Transgender is the state of one's "gender identity" not matching one's "assigned sex"<sup>[3]</sup>.

Transgender is an umbrella term for all people whose gender identity and expression does not conform to the norms and expectations traditionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth, it includes people who are transsexual, transgender otherwise considered gender non conforming<sup>[2]</sup>.

In India, the transgenders have existed all over the world and many of the countries have implemented separate policies and programs for transgenders and other sexual minorities. They have been known under different names in different places: 'baklas' in Philippines, 'berdaches' among American Indian tribes, 'xaniths' in Oman, 'serrers' in Africa, Kathoey in Thailand, and Waria in Indonesia and 'Hijras', 'jogappas', 'jogtas' and 'shiv-shaktis' in south Asia<sup>[4]</sup>.

There is growing evidence that the transgendered conditions is due to person's nature rather than the nurture received early in life. Scientific evidence has shown that certain brain-structures in the hypothalamus (the BSTc region) determine each person's core gender feelings and innate gender identity. These structures are hard-wired prenatally in the lower brain centers and central nervous system (CNS) during the early stages of pregnancy. If something goes amiss in the early stages of pregnancy the sex hormones do not have the usual action on the integration of the fetus's brain. In these cases, children are born having a brain-sex (neurological sex) and innate gender identity opposite to that indicated both by their genes and their genitalia. Since these infants look normal, they will be raised in the wrong gender for their brain-sex (neurological sex). Being raised in the wrong gender causes them profound gender dysphoria and mental anguish as they grow up<sup>[5]</sup>. Society is very harsh on gender-variant people. Some transgender people have lost their families, their jobs, their homes and their support. Transgender children may be subjected to abuse at home at school or in their communities. A lifetime of this can be very challenging and can sometimes cause anxiety disorders, depression and other psychological illnesses. Anxiety is like worry; it is a form of fear. It is a persisting distressful psychological state arising from an inner conflict. The distress may be experienced as a feeling of vague uneasiness or foreboding, a feeling of being on edge, variety of others feelings such as fear, anger, restlessness, irritability, depression, or other diffuse and nameless feelings<sup>[6]</sup>.

### Research problem:

1. What are the psychosocial problems?

2. To find out the level of Quality of Life and Social Anxiety of transgender?

### Objective:

1. To assess the psychosocial problems of transgenders
1. To examine the Quality of Life (QOL) of transgenders
2. To ascertain the level of Social Anxiety of transgenders.

### Sample description:

25 transgenders who were male to female converted transgender women were selected. Participants were fall under the age range between 18 to 35 years. Number of years of work experience of the respondents varied from 1 to 10 years. 10 of them were married and 15 of them were unmarried. Most of them had undergraduate degree or Masters Degree while the other respondents had completed 12<sup>th</sup> STD.

### Tool used for data collection

The following tools were used for the present study

S.NO.	Tools used	Variables measured
1.	WHOQOL-BREF (WHOQOL Group, 1995)	Quality of Life
2.	The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation (BFNE) Scale (Watson & Friend, 1969)	Negative Evaluation

### Findings:

The researcher conducted a focus group discussion in NGO's Chennai to understand the present situation of transgender and problem facing by them in society. The FGD was conducted in a conventional style with opened questions. The researcher slowly probed into the topic with more specific questions which covered many aspects in their life starting from their childhood, school days, events of their gender variance, relationship with their family, employment history and financial position, personal problems including their physical, mental health, identity and sexual preferences and the way society looks at transgender. Based on the results current problems were identified and the variables were selected.

### Results

Descriptive analysis was used to find out mean and stand deviation for the quality of life and social anxiety of transgenders.

**Table 1: Represents the mean and SDs of the quality of life of transgender.**

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Quality of Life	25	58.96	v

Minimum score: 26

Maximum score: 130

Table 1 indicated that there was lower level of quality of life of transgenders. Table 1 would reveal mean and standard deviation values on quality of life among transgenders.

**Discussion:**

The study clearly indicates that there was low level of quality of life among transgender in Chennai because they experiencing numerous difficulty in everyday life. They also experience a number of direct and indirect gender discriminations and are frequently accosted with negative comments, threatening behaviour, physical and sexual abuse. Most of them were unemployed and underemployed and many others were routinely fired by their employers.

These findings supported by past research studies like Newfield, Hart, Dibble and Kohler (2006) evaluated that significant diminished quality of life among female to male transgender individuals. And others like yuksel, aslantas, andemir, bikma and ozturk (2007), and also lakshmanan and victor (2010) were supporting above finding.

**Table 2: Represents the mean and SDs of the social anxiety of transgender.**

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Social Anxiety	25	40.2	10.64

Minimum score: 12

Maximum score: 60

Table 2 indicated that there was higher level of social anxiety of transgenders. Table 2 would reveal mean and standard deviation values on social anxiety among transgenders.

**Discussion:**

The study clearly indicates that there was high level of social anxiety among transgender in Chennai because society's deep rooted fear of sexual and gender non consistency manifests itself in the refusal of basic citizenship rights to these communities including suitable housing facilities [7]. Individual's perception of their position in life in the perspective of concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment. Most of the transgenders were not completely accepted and have contacts with either one or only few of their family members. Some of the items from Brief Fear of Negative evaluation scale which transgendered scored high were-

Item 1: I worry about what other people will think of me even when i know it doesn't make any difference.

Item 3: I am frequently afraid of others people noticing my shortcomings.

Item 8: when i am talking to someone, i worry about what they may be thinking about me.

These findings supported by past research studies suggesting that Karno, Schwartz & Trevor (2011) concluded specific factors that might contribute to higher rates of social anxiety in these adolescents, such as gender role nonconformity, discrimination, victimization, and decreased social support. Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, and Sanchez, (2011) examined the long term implications of LGBT school victimization for young adult adjustment. Such victimization ranges from social interactions in which homophobic discourse is a routine part of everyday communication of verbal harassment and physical violence.

**Table: 3**

**Correlation, coefficient values of social anxiety and quality of life in transgender**

Variable	Quality of Life
social anxiety	-.267*

\*significant at p<0.05 level; NS-Not Significant

According to table 3, showing the result of the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient analysis, indicates that the Quality of Life was significantly negatively related to social anxiety of transgender. This indicates that the higher the quality of life, the poorer the social anxiety.

**Conclusion:**

- There was a significant decrease in quality of life and increases in social anxiety
- Quality of life was significantly related to social anxiety in transgender.

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