



A STUDY OF PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS OF TRANSGENDER IN SOUTH INDIA

Psychology

**Dr. B. Golden
Kisha**

Ph.D/ Principal, NCEfW, Chennai

ABSTRACT

This article examines the psychosocial problems like (anxiety, low self esteem, guilt etc) which can affect well being and quality of life of M2F transgender in India to identify the significant difference in the research variables and in their dimensions. For these purpose 200 plus 6 (100 from rural, 100 from urban and 6 for case study) were selected at purposive sampling technique in Chennai and Thiruvallur District. Expost facto method is adopted by administering tools Demographic sheet, Interview (open) schedule, WHOQOL-BREF, Psychometric properties, Rosenberg self esteem scale and The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE). The data collected from the tools were subjected to various statistical analyses. The results of the analysis were presented in the form of tables, graphs and interpreted appropriately to arrive at logical Findings and Conclusions. It is found that the correlation between the dimensions of Collaborative Learning was significant and also seen that the three inter correlation were positive. It is found that on the basis of findings, the younger transgender have had higher social anxiety. Transgender live in rural and urban area brought significant difference in Quality of Life and Self Esteem. Educational Qualification, Occupation, Income brought significant difference in domains of QoL viz., Social Relations and Environmental Domains. Transgender who undergone SRS –Sex Reassignment Surgery live alone or with other peer transgender have higher self esteem and higher social anxiety.

KEYWORDS:

1. Introduction

All societies assign specific adult roles based on sex which is emphasized in the process of socialization. For many people, the terms sex and gender are used interchangeably. However, although sex and gender are closely related, there is a subtle difference between the two. Sex refers to biological status as male or female. It includes physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia. Gender is a term that is often used to 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". There is an interrelation between our thinking, feeling and behaviour or the psychological realm and what happens in the social realm which includes family, society culture and norms. This interrelation is called psychosocial. If the society accepts one's behavior, one can adjust in the society. If it is not accepted one cannot find a balance between one's needs and society's expectations. This imbalance can have an impact on individual's thinking, emotions and behavior and can lead to psychosocial problems (anxiety, low self esteem, guilt etc) which can affect well being and quality of life. Psychological symptoms are the manifestations of psychosocial problems. 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. According to Israel and Tarver (1997), the most common mental health issues transgender persons experience are depression as well as adjustment, anxiety, personality, and post traumatic stress disorders. While the transgender state itself is not any longer considered to be unhealthy, the stress of dealing with the confusion and society's negative response can lead to numerous other problems. They appear to be at risk for mental health problems like other persons who experience major life changes, relationship difficulties, chronic medical conditions, or significant discrimination on the basis of minority status. Ettner (1999) stresses the devastating effect of shame on the development of a positive identity. Schaefer and Wheeler (2004) identified guilt as underlying a host of psychological problems facing the gender-variant individual. In addition, the process of transitioning to the other sex brings up a myriad of specific challenges, some anticipated and others harder to predict. Transgendered clients face many possible losses in their lives. (Miller, 1996). Choosing to be openly gender variant, in particular the transition process for a transsexual, can result in the loss of family and friends who disapprove or do not understand. The loss can be particularly traumatic if, as is often the case, the disclosure or discovery of the person's transgender status is unplanned. The loss of a job and place in the community are also very real possibilities. Even for

those people who successfully chose to keep their transgender status private, there is loss. "Denied the opportunity to speak our stories, transsexuals are denied the joy of our histories." (Bornstein, 1995). Winter (2009) found that many transpeople in Asian countries who drop out of education early, especially those drifting into the city with little education or few family contacts, find it difficult to get a job. They experience some form of victimization as a direct result of their transgender identity or presentation. This victimization ranges from subtle forms of harassment and discrimination to blatant verbal, physical, and sexual assault, including beatings, rape and even homicide. The majority of assaults against transgender persons are never reported to the police. Available evidence suggest the need to address alcohol and substance use among Hijras/TG communities. Hijras provide several reasons justifying their alcohol consumption that range from the need to 'forget worries' (because there is no family support or no one cares about them) to managing rough clients in their sex work life. However, alcohol use is associated with inability to use condoms or insist their clients to use condoms, and thus increase risk for HIV transmission and acquisition. (TG Issue Brief, UNDP, VC, Dec2010) The objective of this study focused on Quality of Life, Self Esteem, Social Anxiety of Transgender.

2. Statement of the Problem

What are the psychosocial problems affecting the transgender and how do certain demographic variables affect the Quality of life (QoL), Self esteem and Social anxiety in transgender?

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out how demographic factors like age, education, income, and place of residence, type of employment influence Quality of Life, Self Esteem and Social Anxiety among transgender
2. To study how sex reassignment surgery (SRS) affects Quality of Life, Self Esteem and Social Anxiety among transgender

4. Need for the Study

Down the ages, our society has condemned and alienated people who do not conform to its norms. Transgender persons are one such group of people who have been marginalized in many societies. Leading a life as a transgender is far from easy because such people can be neither categorized as male nor as female and this deviation is "unacceptable" to society's vast majority. Trying to eke out a dignified living is even worse. Research shows that transgender are even overlooked by the rest of the LGBT community. Transgender still float beneath the surface, most of them invisible, like the unseen portion of the iceberg. One of the important problems transgender face in the society is lack of social acceptance. Although they have been part of every culture and society in recorded human history, they have only recently become the focus of attention in psychological, medical and social research. As the visibility of transgender increases it is time to help them join the main

stream of society.

5. Hypotheses

1. Age will have a significant influence on the QoL in transgender.
2. Age will have a significant influence on the self esteem in transgender.
3. Age will not have a significant influence on the social anxiety in transgender.
4. There will be no significant difference between transgender living in rural and urban areas in their QoL.
5. There will be no significant difference between transgender living in rural and urban areas in their self esteem.
6. There will be no significant difference between transgender living in rural and urban areas in their social anxiety.
7. There will be no significant difference in the QoL of transgender classified according to their educational qualification.
8. There will be no significant difference in the self esteem of transgender classified according to their educational qualification.
9. There will be no significant difference in the social anxiety of transgender classified according to their educational qualification.
10. Income will have a significant effect on the QoL of transgender
11. Income will have a significant effect on the self esteem of transgender.
12. Income will not have a significant effect on the social anxiety of transgender.
13. Occupation will have a significant effect on the QoL of Transgender.
14. Occupation will have a significant effect on the self esteem of transgender.
15. Occupation will have a significant effect on the social anxiety of transgender.
16. There will be no significant difference in the QoL of transgender categorized on the basis of their living arrangements.
17. There will be a significant difference in the self esteem of transgender categorized on the basis of their living arrangements.
18. There will be no significant difference in the social anxiety of transgender categorized on the basis of their living arrangements.
19. There will be a significant difference in QoL between transgender who have undergone sex reassignment surgery and those who have not.
20. There will be a significant difference in self esteem between transgender who have undergone sex reassignment surgery and those who have not.
21. There will be no significant difference between transgender who have undergone sex reassignment surgery and those who have not in social anxiety.
22. There will be a significant difference in the QoL of transgender who have realized their gender difference before 12 years and those who realize it after 12 years.
23. There will be no significant difference in the self esteem of transgender who have realized their gender difference before 12 years and those who realize it after 12 years
24. There will be no significant difference in the social anxiety of transgender who have realized their gender difference before 12 years and those who realize it after 12 years

6. Research Design

Expost facto design was used. In addition the case study method which is a descriptive method was also used. The independent variables selected for this study were socio demographic factors like age, education, place of residence, occupation, income and living arrangements. Other transgender related factors like sex reassignment surgery and age when gender variance was realized were also included in the study. The dependent variables were Quality of Life, Social anxiety and Self esteem. Case studies of six transgender were also collected by using a semi standardized interview schedule. This method of study was included as it allows people being interviewed to describe experiences in their own language. It becomes possible to appreciate their unique struggles and achievements as well as understand their general outlook towards life. Hoping that the qualitative data would provide in depth information which can supplement quantitative data collected in the study.

7. Sample

A purposive sampling design was adopted to collect data. 200 transgender, 100 from urban and 100 from rural areas were included. All of them were MtF transgender. Their ages ranged from 18 to 50 years. They all had received primary level of education. The characteristics of the sample included in the study were tabulated.

Inclusive criteria:

1. Only MtF transgender were included in the sample
2. They were not below 18 years of age
3. Only those who expressed willingness to answer the questionnaires were included in the study. The six transgender included in the case study were in the age range of 22 to 61 years.

8. Tools Used

Studying Quality of Life, Self esteem and Social anxiety and psychosocial problems among transgender following tools were used.

#1. Demographic sheet

Details obtained on the demographic sheet are as follows: age, education, place of residence, occupation, monthly income, living arrangements, sex reassignment surgery, membership in a transgender rights association, present health status, and problems faced like housing, employment, support from family and ambition in life.

#2. Interview schedule

The questions to be asked in the interview for collecting their case history covered many aspects in their life starting from their childhood, their school days, events around their realization of their gender variance, relationship with their family, their employment history and their financial position, their personal problems including their physical and mental health, their goals, their identity and sexual preferences and the way society looks at transgender

#3. The concept of Quality of Life WHOQOL-BREF

It is based on the same definition as the WHOQOL-100 and defined as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns (WHOQOL Group, 1995). Whilst the WHOQOL-100 allows a detailed assessment of individual facets relating to quality of life, it may be too lengthy for some uses.

#4. Psychometric properties

Domain scores produced by the WHOQOL-BREF correlate highly (0.89 or above) with WHOQOL-100 domain scores (calculated on a four domain structure). The psychometric properties were evaluated using cross-sectional data from 23 countries. Analyses of internal consistency, item-total correlations, discriminant validity and construct validity through confirmatory factor analysis, indicate that the WHOQOL-BREF has good to excellent psychometric properties and performs well in preliminary tests of validity.

#5. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

It is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem. It consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. Self-esteem is a positive or negative orientation toward oneself; an overall evaluation of one's worth or value.

#6. The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE)

It is a measure of a person's tolerance for the possibility they might be judged disparagingly or hostilely by others. This scale measures fear of negative evaluation from others, hallmark criteria for the diagnosis of social phobia and other disorders, and is relevant to the study of human social behavior in general.

9. DATA COLLECTION

The head of the SIP (South Indian Positive Network) organization was contacted and briefed about the research study. She immediately agreed to cooperate and other transgender in the organization were introduced. The investigator was able to win their confidence by talking to them informally. They voluntarily offered their services in locating other transgender with diverse backgrounds. Some of them who lived mainly by begging were contacted by the investigator in places like the railway stations or in the slum areas. In both Chennai and in the rural area of Thiruvallur district contacting transgender through their community network made it easier to reach them.

Case Study:

Six transgender from different backgrounds were contacted. The transgender were individually interviewed after fixing a prior appointment. Care was taken to see that a good rapport was established. They were informed that their responses will be recorded manually and reassured that the data collected will be used only for research purposes. The interviewees were encouraged to respond freely by taking care to see that the interview was conducted in a free

conversational style. Whenever the interviewee's responses were brief, more details were sought by using suitable probes like "Can you please give me some more details" or "Can you give me an example?" Care was taken throughout to see that the interviewee was relaxed and felt comfortable.

10. Limitations of the Study

Geographically, sample area selected was Chennai and Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu.

1. Due to time limit, the investigator could not survey all transgender M2F and F2M.
2. The investigator restricted her research study only to rural area of Thiruvallur and Chennai North.

11. Data Analysis

Data was collected by administering questionnaires and by conducting a semi structured interview. The data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to understand the psychosocial problems of transgender as well as to know how certain socio demographic factors influence their QoL self esteem and social anxiety.

In the present study, the following statistical techniques were used.

- Descriptive Analysis (Mean, Standard Deviation)
- Differential Analysis (t-value, F-ratio)
- ANOVA

12. Findings of the Study

1. Age does not have a significant influence on their QoL and self esteem in transgender.
2. Age has a significant influence on their social anxiety of transgender. The younger transgender have significantly higher social anxiety.
3. There is a significant difference between transgender from the rural and urban areas in all the domains of QoL except the psychological.
4. There is no significant difference between transgender who live in the rural and urban areas in their self esteem.
5. There is a significant difference between transgender who live in the rural and urban areas in their self esteem.
6. There is a significant difference in the social relations and environmental domains of QoL among the transgender categorized according to their educational qualifications
7. There is no significant difference in self esteem and social anxiety among the transgender categorized according to their educational qualifications.
8. Income has a significant effect on the social relations and environmental domains of QoL of transgender.
9. Income does not have a significant effect on the self esteem and social anxiety of transgender.
10. Occupation has a significant effect all domains of QoL except that of environmental in transgender.
11. Occupation has a significant effect on the self esteem and social anxiety of transgender. Those who live by begging have lower self esteem and higher social anxiety.
12. There is a significant difference in the social relations and environmental domains of QoL of transgender categorized on the basis of their living arrangements.
13. There is a significant difference in the self esteem and social anxiety of transgender categorized on the basis of their living arrangements. Transgender who live with their families have significantly lower self esteem than those who live alone or with other transgender. They also have a significantly higher level of social anxiety.
14. There is a significant difference between transgender who have undergone sex reassignment surgery and those who have not in all domains of QoL, except the psychological.
15. There is no significant difference between transgender who have undergone sex reassignment surgery and those who have not in self esteem and social anxiety.
16. There is a significant difference in the physical health and social relations domains of QoL of transgender who have realized their gender difference before 12 years and those who realize it after 12 years.
17. Transgender who have realized their gender variance after 12 years have a significantly higher self esteem than those who realize it before 12 years.
18. There is no significant difference in the social anxiety of

transgender who have realized their gender difference before 12 years and those who realize it after 12 years.

13. Conclusion:

It may be concluded that on the basis of findings, the younger transgender have had higher social anxiety. Transgender live in rural and urban area brought significant difference in Quality of Life and Self Esteem. Educational Qualification, Occupation, Income brought significant difference in domains of QoL viz., Social Relations and Environmental Domains. Transgender who undergone SRS –Sex Reassignment Surgery live alone or with other peer transgender have higher self esteem and higher social anxiety.

14. Suggestion

Problems faced by transgender may be studied by conducting focused group discussions. A comparative study of the problems of M2F and F2M transgender may be made. Mental health problems like depression and loneliness which was evident from the interview can be taken up for further research. The study threw light on the problems faced by the transgender. It shows that lack of suitable skills has driven the transgender to prostitution and beggary. Functional literacy programmes can be conducted for transgender so that they can improve their employability. Providing more training opportunities which will help them to be self employed is the need of the hour since the study shows that finding employment is one of their major problems.

