



MENTAL HEALTH AND LIFE SATISFACTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN TRANSGENDER AND CISGENDER PERSONS OF MANIPUR

Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Background And Objectives: To compare the relationship of Mental Health and Life satisfaction between transgender and cisgender persons in Manipur. **Methods:** The sample consists of 200 individuals, of which 100 subjects were transgender and another 100 were cisgender persons from Imphal West District of Manipur. Participants who were willing to give consent for participating in the study were selected through simple random sampling technique. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) were then administered. **Results:** The findings of the study indicate that in the three domains of mental health namely, Depression, Anxiety and Stress, both the genders reported having normal level of mental health concerns. However, cisgender persons reported having higher levels of anxiety and transgender persons had higher level of stress. No significant association was observed in terms of life satisfaction in both the genders. As seen among the transgender sample, life satisfaction correlates negatively with the three domains of mental health namely, depression, anxiety and stress which is an indication that any increase in the symptom of either or all of the three domains will lead to poorer life satisfaction. **Conclusion:** The present study concluded that no significant association was observed in terms of life satisfaction in both the genders. However, in the domains of mental health namely anxiety, cisgender persons reported having higher levels of anxiety and transgender persons had higher level of stress. Studies have shown that transgender youth had a higher risk of reporting psychological distress, self-harm, major depression episodes and suicide as well as increased risk of psychiatric morbidity as compared to their peers.

KEYWORDS

Mental Health, Life Satisfaction, Transgender, Cisgender

INTRODUCTION

Transgender persons includes different groups of individuals who are gender incongruent, with their identities or expressions of gender not matching the sex they were assigned at birth¹. Cisgender persons, on the other hand, comprise the social majority, whose gender identities or expressions are congruent with their sex assigned at birth. In India, transgender people include hijras/kinnars (eunuchs), shiv-shaktis, jogappas, Sakhi, jogtas, Aradhis etc. In fact, there are many who do not belong to any of the groups but are transgender persons individually. Transgenders fall under the LGBT group (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender). They constitute the marginalized section of the society in India, and thus face legal, social as well as economic difficulties². In a landmark judgement on April 15 in 2014, the Supreme Court observed that "The transgender community, generally known as "Hijras" in this country, are a section of Indian citizens who are treated by the society as "unnatural and generally as objects of ridicule and even fear on account of superstition". It identified transgender as a third gender and stated that one's sexual orientation is an integral part of personality, dignity and freedom³.

Mental Health among Transgenders

Studies have reported higher incidence of psychiatric problems, such as anxiety and depression and a higher degree of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among transgender people compared to the general population. It shows that transgender people are at particular risk of mental health concerns, psychological distress and other indicators of poor life satisfaction^{4,5}. In developing countries like India, which is bound by strong social and cultural barriers, transgender find themselves in an even more difficult situation becoming unable to express their concerns and problems⁶.

Life Satisfaction Among Transgenders

Satisfaction with Life (SWL) is defined as the level of contentedness people have when they evaluate their lives. This evaluation stems from self-defined standards, values, and social comparison. Although there have been multiple decades of research which have demonstrated the usefulness of measuring SWL to understand people's perceptions of their lives, there has been little empirical research on how members of the transgender community perceive their SWL. However, there are a number of studies that examine a similar broad concept, Quality of Life (QOL), which is associated with living conditions, and is typically defined as having a high convergence with subjective well-being (SWB) and Satisfaction with Life (SWL)^{7,8}.

Objective

The objective of the present study is to compare the relationship of Mental Health and Life Satisfaction between transgender and

cisgender persons in Manipur.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive study design was used in the present study. The study was conducted in the Department of Clinical Psychology, RIMS, Imphal. The sample consists of 200 individuals, of which 100 subjects were transgender and another 100 were cisgender persons from Imphal West District of Manipur. Participants were then administered Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)⁹ and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)¹⁰.

Procedures

In the present study, necessary permission was taken from each of the concern authority of selected transgender community organization. They were approached personally and explained thoroughly about the study. They were also informed that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study period. After the consent is obtained from the respondents, Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) were administered.

RESULT

The following table shows the comparison of different levels of satisfaction of life and mental health between transgender and cisgender persons of Manipur.

Table 1 Mean And S.d. Of Life Satisfaction And Gender Identification

Gender Identification	Mean	S.D.	t-test	d.f.	p-value	Remark
Transgender	22.46	5.61	1.731	198	0.085	Not significant
Cisgender	23.78	5.15				

**Significant at 0.01 levels of significance

*Significant at 0.05 levels of significance

Table 1: It was observed from the table that the mean score of life satisfaction of transgender and cisgender person in Manipur were 22.46 and 23.78 respectively. Here, the mean variation was negligible and when applied independent t-test it was found to be insignificant as evident by p-value= 0.085. This finding indicates that there exist no significant relation between life satisfaction and gender identification.

Table 2 Mean And S.d. Of Depression And Gender Identification

Gender Identification	Mean	S.D.	t-test	d.f.	p-value	Remark
Transgender	7.81	7.062	0.256	198	0.798	Not significant
Cisgender	8.06	6.737				

**Significant at 0.01 levels of significance

*Significant at 0.05 levels of significance

Table 2: From the table, it was observed that the mean score of levels of Depression of transgender and cisgender person in Manipur were 7.81 and 8.06 respectively. Here, the mean variation was negligible and when applied independent t-test, it was found to be insignificant as evident by p-value= 0.798. This finding shows that there exist no significant relation between depression and gender identification.

Table 3 Mean and S.D. of anxiety and gender identification

Gender Identification	Mean	S.D.	t-test	d.f.	p-value	Remark
Transgender	5.80	5.123	3.105	198	0.002**	Highly significant
Cisgender	8.36	6.460				

**Significant at 0.01 levels of significance

*Significant at 0.05 levels of significance

Table 3: In the study samples, the mean score of levels of anxiety in transgender and cisgender persons were found to be 5.80 and 8.36 respectively. Here, the mean variation was found to be maximal and statistically when applied independent t-test, it was found to have significant relationship between the two study groups and anxiety as evident by p-value= 0.002. This finding indicated that levels of anxiety is higher in cisgender persons as compared to transgender persons.

Table 4 Mean and S.D. of stress and gender identification

Gender Identification	Mean	S.D.	t-test	d.f.	p-value	Remark
Transgender	12.37	6.427	1.980	198	0.049*	Highly significant
Cisgender	10.56	6.501				

**Significant at 0.01 levels of significance

*Significant at 0.05 levels of significance

Table 4: It was observed from the table that the mean score of Stress level of transgender and cisgender person in Manipur were 12.37 and 10.56 respectively. Here, the mean variation was found to be maximal and statistically when applied independent t-test, it was found to have significant relationship between the two study groups and Stress level as evident by p-value= 0.049, indicated that levels of Stress is higher in transgender persons as compared to cisgender persons.

DISCUSSION

The present study was carried out to compare the relationship of Mental health and Life satisfaction between Transgender and Cisgender persons in Manipur.

Satisfaction Of Life:

With regard to the level of life satisfaction, it was observed that there was no significant relationship between transgender and cisgender persons. This finding yielded mixed results in other findings. A study conducted by Motman et al on the quality of life of transgender male and female compared with the general population revealed no significant difference between transwoman and ciswomen while they had lower QOL compared to transmen¹¹. While another study revealed that transgender person had poorer life satisfaction than their cisgender counterpart¹².

Mental Health:

On the domain of Depression, it was observed that no significant association was indicated between transgender and cisgender persons with respect to the domain of Depression. Some studies pointed out that rates of depression are higher in transgender women than in general population, warranting an understanding of the variables related to depression in this group¹³.

On the domain of Anxiety, a relevant association was found between transgender and cisgender persons. It indicated that cisgender persons had higher level of Anxiety as compared to transgender persons. But this finding is contrary to a study conducted by Bouman et al where it was found that transgender population had a nearly three fold increased risk of probable anxiety disorder. In the study, factors such as low self esteem and interpersonal functioning were found to be significant predictors of anxiety symptoms¹⁴.

On the domain of Stress, a relevant association was found between transgender and cisgender persons. It suggested that transgender

persons were found to have higher level of stress as compared to cisgender persons. This finding is in consistent with the prior findings on minority stress theory with transgender samples, where higher levels of minority stress were associated with greater psychological distress¹⁵.

Studies have shown that transgender youth had a higher risk of reporting psychological distress, self-harm, major depression episodes and suicide as well as increased risk of psychiatric morbidity as compared to their peers. Although a notable minority of them did not report negative health outcomes, the study showed mental health disparities faced by them are considerable^{16,17}.

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that in the three domains of mental health namely, Depression, Anxiety and Stress, both the genders reported having normal level of mental health concerns. However, cisgender persons reported having higher levels of anxiety and transgender persons had higher level of stress. No significant association was observed in terms of life satisfaction in both the genders. As seen among the transgender sample, life satisfaction correlates negatively with the three domains of mental health namely, depression, anxiety and stress which is an indication that any increase in the symptom of either or all of the three domains will lead to poorer life satisfaction. Further, the findings of the study will be useful to understand gender diverse identities and related health disparities. It will also help mental health practitioners as well as family members in accepting and providing support to the transitioning individual through the use of information provided by the study.

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