



RESILIENCE, MENTAL HEALTH, AND PURPOSE IN LIFE AMONG TRANSGENDER PERSONS OF MANIPUR: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY FROM NORTHEAST INDIA

Clinical Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Background: Transgender persons face disproportionate psychological distress due to chronic discrimination and stigma, yet resilience may serve as a protective resource. Research on resilience alongside mental health and purpose in life remains limited, particularly in Northeast India. **Objectives:** This cross-sectional study aimed to (1) measure the levels of resilience, depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life among transgender persons of Manipur, and (2) examine the relationship between resilience and these psychological variables. **Methods:** A total of 200 transgender persons were recruited from two transgender community organizations in Manipur using multistage random sampling. Resilience, depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life were assessed using the Brief Resilience Scale, DASS-42, Adult Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire, and Purpose in Life Test, respectively. Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests and Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed. **Results:** The majority of respondents exhibited normal resilience (70%), normal depression (83%), normal anxiety (83%), and normal stress (85%), along with low suicidal ideation (88%) and high purpose in life (78%); all distributions were statistically significant ($p = .001$). Resilience showed no significant correlation with depression ($r = -.066$), anxiety ($r = -.067$), or suicidal ideation ($r = -.065$), but was significantly negatively correlated with stress ($r = -.174$, $p = .014$) and significantly positively correlated with purpose in life ($r = .404$, $p = .001$). **Conclusion:** Resilience among transgender persons of Manipur is strongly linked to purpose in life and buffers situational stress, but shows limited direct association with depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, suggesting that these outcomes are more strongly driven by structural minority stress. Interventions fostering meaning-making and identity affirmation, alongside stigma-reduction efforts, may enhance holistic well-being in this population.

KEYWORDS

Resilience; Transgender Persons; Mental Health; Suicidal Ideation; Purpose In Life

INTRODUCTION

Transgender persons represent an increasingly visible and diverse minority population, encompassing individuals whose gender identity or expression differs from that assigned at birth (Devor, 2004). In India, transgender communities are represented by diverse indigenous identities — including hijra, kinnar, thirunangai, and kothi — historically organized into structured social systems that provide mutual support (Gee, 2014). Despite documented sociocultural acceptance in ancient India (Nanda, 1996), transgender persons today occupy a marginalized position, frequently facing discrimination, violence, and exclusion from health care, education, employment, and legal recognition (Narain, 2003).

In the Indian context, transgender individuals commonly experience family rejection, childhood abuse, bullying, early school dropout, forced marriage, and exploitation by partners, police, and the public (Sridevi & Veera, 2011). These chronic stressors place them at elevated risk for psychological distress, including depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation (Mustanski & Liu, 2013), with studies reporting suicidal ideation rates ranging from 32% to 50% (Testa et al., 2012).

Resilience, the capacity to cope with adversity and avoid psychological dysfunction under stress (Luthar et al., 2000), has been consistently linked to better mental health outcomes, including lower anxiety, depression, and stress (Hjemdal et al., 2011). As a protective resource associated with self-esteem and social support, resilience may play a critical role in buffering the mental health impact of minority stress among transgender persons (Davydov et al., 2010).

Despite the well-documented mental health vulnerabilities of transgender populations, research examining resilience and its relationship with mental health outcomes in this population remains limited, particularly in the northeastern Indian context. To date, no study has systematically examined resilience alongside depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life among transgender persons in Manipur. Addressing this gap, the present study aimed to (1) measure the levels of resilience, depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life among transgender persons of Manipur, and (2) examine the relationship between resilience and depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation and purpose in life among transgender persons. Findings from this study may inform targeted, culturally relevant mental health interventions and policy measures for transgender populations in this understudied region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational study was conducted among transgender persons (transmen and transwomen) registered

with transgender community organizations in Manipur, Northeast India, to measure levels of resilience, depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life, and to examine their relationship with resilience. Of the five registered transgender community organisations in the state, two were selected through simple random sampling as study sites. Eligible participants were aged 18 years or above, self-identified as female-to-male or male-to-female transgender, registered with a participating organisation, and willing to provide informed consent; those who were intersex at birth, identified as LGBQ, had undergone transsexual surgical reassignment, or declined participation were excluded. The required sample size, calculated using the standard population proportion formula based on the 2011 Census figure of 1,343 transgender persons in Manipur (95% confidence level, 6% margin of error), was 200. A multistage random sampling technique was employed: two organisations were selected in the first stage, followed by stratified random sampling (transmen and transwomen) in the second stage, with 100 participants selected from each stratum via a lottery method. Data were collected through face-to-face, interviewer-administered surveys using four standardised instruments — the Brief Resilience Scale, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale, Adult Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire, and Purpose in Life Test, following formal institutional permission and written informed consent. Data were analysed using the chi-square goodness-of-fit test to assess distribution across categorical levels, and Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between resilience and the study variables, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$.

Ethical Considerations: Institutional ethical approval and permission from the respective transgender community organisations were obtained prior to data collection. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity of responses were maintained throughout the study.

RESULTS

This section presents the study's findings in two parts. Table 1 outlines the levels of resilience, depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life among transgender persons of Manipur, while Table 2 presents the correlation between resilience and these psychological variables.

Table 1 Levels of Resilience, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Suicidal Ideation, and Purpose in Life of Transgender Persons (N = 200)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-square	d.f.	P-value
Resilience					
Low (1 – 2.99)	60	30	32.000	1	0.001**
Normal (3 – 4.30)	140	70			
Total	200	100			

Depression					
Normal (0–9)	167	83	365.520	3	0.001**
Mild (10–13)	9	5			
Moderate (14–20)	15	7			
Severe (21 above)	9	5			
Total	200	100			
Anxiety					
Normal (0–7)	166	83	358.920	3	0.001**
Mild (8–9)	11	5			
Moderate (10–14)	13	7			
Severe (15 above)	10	5			
Total	200	100			
Stress					
Normal (0–14)	170	85	240.280	2	0.001**
Mild (15–18)	14	7			
Moderate (19–25)	16	8			
Total	200	100			
Suicidal Ideation					
Low	177	88	118.580	1	0.001**
High	23	12			
Total	200	100			
Purpose in Life					
High (more than 50)	157	78	64.980	1	0.001**
Low (less than 50)	43	22			
Total	200	100			

**Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 1 presents the levels of resilience, depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life among transgender persons of Manipur, along with the results of chi-square goodness-of-fit tests conducted across the categories of each variable. Regarding resilience, 30% of respondents exhibited low resilience, 70% exhibited normal resilience, and this distribution was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 32.000$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.001$). For depression, the majority (83%) fell within the normal range, with only 5%, 7%, and 5% reporting mild, moderate, and severe depression, respectively ($\chi^2 = 365.520$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.001$). A similar pattern was observed for anxiety, with 83% in the normal range and smaller proportions reporting mild (5%), moderate (7%), and severe (5%) anxiety ($\chi^2 = 358.920$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.001$). For stress, 85% of respondents were within the normal range, while 7% and 8% reported mild and moderate stress, respectively ($\chi^2 = 240.280$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.001$). With respect to suicidal ideation, 88% of the transgender persons reported low levels while 12% reported high levels ($\chi^2 = 118.580$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.001$). Finally, for purpose in life, 78% of respondents reported high levels while 22% reported low levels ($\chi^2 = 64.980$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.001$). All chi-square tests were statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that the observed distributions across categories were not due to chance. Overall, the findings suggest that the majority of transgender persons in Manipur exhibited normal levels of resilience, depression, anxiety, and stress; low levels of suicidal ideation; and high levels of purpose in life.

Table 2 Correlation Between Resilience and Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Suicidal Ideation and Purpose in Life of Transgender Persons

Variables	Coefficient of Correlation	P-value	Remark
Depression	-0.066	0.353	Insignificant
Anxiety	-0.067	0.357	Insignificant
Stress	-0.174*	0.014	Significant
Suicidal Ideation	-0.065	0.364	Insignificant
Purpose in life	0.404**	0.001	Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2: This table shows the coefficient of correlation (r-value) between resilience and different types of common mental disorders and purpose in life of transgender persons of Manipur. “Depression ($r = -0.066$)”, a subtype of common mental disorder, was not correlated with resilience as evidenced by p -value = 0.353. Other subtypes of common mental disorders, such as anxiety ($r = -0.067$) and suicidal ideation ($r = -0.065$), were also found to have no correlation with resilience, as manifested by p -values of 0.357 and 0.364, respectively. However, stress ($r = -0.174$) showed a negative correlation with resilience ($p = 0.014$). The negative correlation indicated that as resilience increased, stress decreased. Other variables, such as purpose

in life ($r = 0.404$), showed a positive correlation with resilience ($p = 0.001$). The positive correlation indicated that as resilience increased, so did purpose in life.

DISCUSSION

The first objective examined levels of resilience, mental health, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life among transgender persons of Manipur. Low resilience was found in 30% of respondents, broadly consistent with Chavada and Kurushev (2021), who reported 28% of transgender persons in Puducherry with the lowest resilience levels. A smaller proportion reported clinically significant depression (12%), anxiety (12%), and stress (15%), reflecting continued vulnerability to psychological distress linked to stigma and discrimination despite most respondents falling within normal ranges.

Suicidal ideation was high in 12% of respondents — notably lower than the 32–50% suicide attempt rates reported by Virupaksha et al. (2016) across countries, though this remains clinically significant given known risk factors such as family rejection, victimisation, and discriminatory treatment in health-care settings. Encouragingly, most respondents (78%) reported a strong sense of purpose in life, suggesting that despite social adversity, many transgender persons in Manipur derive meaning from belonging to their community and from the affirmation of their identity.

The second objective examined the relationship between resilience and depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, and purpose in life among transgender persons of Manipur. Resilience was not significantly correlated with depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation, but was significantly negatively correlated with stress and significantly positively correlated with purpose in life. The non-significant associations align with Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model, which attributes mental health disparities among gender minorities primarily to external stigma-related stressors such as discrimination, victimization, and non-affirmation — rather than deficits in individual coping resources. This is supported by Wilson et al. (2024), who found only small, inconsistent correlations between GMSR resilience subscales (Testa et al., 2015) and depression/anxiety ($r = -.07$ to $-.16$), far weaker than minority stress variables ($r = .22$ to $.40$), and by Burgwal et al. (2026) and Rabasco and Andover (2021), who similarly found limited predictive value of resilience constructs relative to victimization and discrimination for internalizing symptoms and suicidal ideation. This pattern is not universal, however — Sahin and Buyukgok (2021), in a clinical Turkish sample, found stronger resilience–symptom correlations, possibly reflecting differences in sample type or resilience measures used.

The significant negative correlation between resilience and stress supports resilience's role as a buffer against situational distress, consistent with Sahin and Buyukgok (2021), suggesting resilience may more directly mitigate immediate stress even when its influence on deeper clinical symptomatology remains limited. The strongest finding — the positive correlation between resilience and purpose in life — aligns with positive psychology literature framing the two as mutually reinforcing resources (Lasota & Mróz, 2021; Arslan & Yıldırım, 2021), and closely parallels PP and Arur (2026), who found that meaning in life buffered mental health risks and fostered resilience among Hijra women in South India, reinforcing the cross-cultural relevance of purpose in life as a key resilience correlate among transgender populations.

CONCLUSION

This study found that most transgender persons in Manipur exhibited normal resilience, depression, anxiety, and stress, with low suicidal ideation and high purpose in life. Resilience showed no significant relationship with depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation, suggesting these outcomes are more strongly shaped by structural minority stress than individual coping capacity. However, resilience was significantly associated with lower stress and, most notably, with higher purpose in life. These findings highlight the need for interventions that foster meaning-making, identity affirmation, and social inclusion alongside stigma-reduction efforts to promote holistic mental health and resilience among transgender persons in this understudied Northeast Indian population.

Declaration of Patient Consent

Written consent forms were obtained from all the respondents.

Ethical Policy and Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical clearance was taken from the RIMS's research ethics board. Reference No. 156/Project-Misc./RIMS-2017

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Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest.

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