

Quality of life: A Study of Transgenders

Shalini Lakshmipathy^{1*}, Dr. S. Thenmozhi²

ABSTRACT

Gender is the societal attribution and refers to the identity that an individual develops through the process of socialization. Most aspects of masculine or feminine are taught by society and are learned by individuals. The term transgender signifies a person who is either male or female. Transgender individuals face numerous difficulties in their everyday life including problems with accessing the quality of life. So, the present study has focused on the Quality of life of male to female transgender. The objective of the study is to find out the level of quality of life of transgenders. The study used quantitative methods adopting a descriptive research design. The in-depth interviews and standardized tools WHOQOL-BRIEF (WHOQOL Group, 1995) were used for data collection. The results indicate a low level of quality of life of the transgender individuals in the current life situation.

Keywords: *Transgender, Quality of Life, WHOQOL-BRIEF*

Gender is a term that is referred to ways that people act or feels 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"^[3].

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^[2].

The transgenders exist all over the world and many countries have implemented separate policies and programs for transgenders and other sexual minorities. They have been known under different names in different places: 'backlash' in Philippines, 'berdaches' among American Indian tribes, 'xaniths' in Oman, 'servers' in Africa, Kathoey in Thailand, and Waria in Indonesia and 'Hijras', 'jogappas', 'jogtas' and 'shiv-shaktis' in South Asia^[4].

There is growing evidence that the transgendered conditions are due to the individual's nature rather than the nurture received early in life. Scientific evidence has shown that certain brain-

¹ Ph.D Scholar, Department of Counselling Psychology, University of Madras, Chennai, India

² Professor and Head, Department of Counselling Psychology, University of Madras, India

*Responding Author

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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^[5].

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^[6].

Purpose of research

The purpose of the investigation was to study the level of quality of life of transgenders.

METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional study using ex post facto research design aimed to find out the level of quality of life of transgenders. This study used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used and the sample was drawn from NGO's in Chennai based on the inclusion criteria. The present study consisted of 25 transwomen. All of them are Male to Female transgenders.

Inclusion criteria

- Transgenders those who had completed under graduation were included.
- Transgenders those who had basic knowledge of English were included.
- Transgenders those who had converted to male to female were included.
- Transwomen those who expressed willingness to answer the questionnaires were included in the study.
- Transgender those who sexual orientation or physical sex characteristics were included in the study.

Exclusion criteria:

- Transgender those who are Bisexual are excluded in the study.
- Transgender those who are female to male are excluded.
- Transgender those who are working and not working are excluded from the study.
- Transgender those who sexual orientation or physical sex characteristics are excluded in the study.

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Sample characteristic:

The participants consisted of 25 trans- women. Their ages ranged from 21 years to 25 years. The mean age of the participant was 21.83 years (SD = 0.86). All students had completed graduation. The socioeconomic status of the family was mostly middle class.

Measure:

The following psychological test was used:

Tool used	Variables measured
WHOQOL-BREF (WHOQOL Group, 1995)	Quality of Life

RESULTS

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

Table 1: Represents the mean and SDs of the social anxiety of transgender.

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Quality of life	25	58.96	37.07
<i>Minimum score: 26</i>			
<i>Maximum score: 130</i>			

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

Table 2: Correlation between education and total QOL of the respondents

		Education of the respondent	Total QOL
Education of the respondent	Pearson correlation	1	.056
		Sig (2-tailed)	
		N	25

**significant at $p < 0.01$ level

Table 3: correlation between age and total QOL of the respondents

		Education of the respondent	Total QOL
Age of the respondent	Pearson correlation	1	.034
		Sig (2-tailed)	
		N	25

**significant at $p < 0.01$ level

Table 2 and 3 indicated that there was not significantly correlated with age and education of transgenders in the quality of life. Table 1 would reveal mean and standard deviation values on quality of life among transgenders.

DISCUSSION

The study clearly indicates that there was a low level of quality of life of transgenders 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

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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 a few of their family members. Some of the items from the quality of life scale which transgendered scored low were-

Item 1: how would you rate your quality of life?

Item 5: how much do you enjoy your life?.

These findings supported by past research studies suggesting that Karno, Schwartz & Trevor (2011) concluded specific factors that might contribute to higher rates of quality of life 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.

The variable age, education, and quality of life had no significantly correlated for the respondents. Wilchins, Lombardi, Priesing, & Malouf (1997) study shows that half of their sample faced discrimination and violence from their life. Violence and discrimination can reduce their quality of life in every aspect. In the present study as well the majority of the respondents are facing discrimination from society.

CONCLUSION

From the present study, it can be concluded the poor level of quality of life of the transgender. Public awareness and acceptance of transgender individuals have been gradually improving in the recent decade, there is still a long way to go in ensuring them that adequate services are available to this population and in fighting the discrimination, harassment and social stigmatization that they face.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not a conflict of interests

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