
POINT OF VIEW OF UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS ABOUT MALE -TO-FEMALE GENDER DYSPHORICS IN PAKISTAN.

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Abstract

The diversity within the gender identity of male-to-female gender dysphoric community is investigated with the goal of developing a model of gender identity that can more adequately describe this diversity than the current conceptualizations of gender identity disorders can do. Participants selected for the purpose were highly qualified teachers of Peshawar University. Participants completed an interview-based questionnaire about their points of view and what contributed to their personal beliefs about gender dysphoria. Analysis of the data showed that even highly qualified teachers were not able to identify the difference between the types of gender dysphoria. .

Keywords: Dysphoria, Pakistan, Gender Identity

Introduction

Most of us take for granted being a man or woman; one of the most basic truths of who we are. Although many of us are not conventional men or women, we have always identified with certainly the answer to the question, "are you a boy or a girl". There are some among us who know with conviction the answer to that question, but that contradicts the reality of the bodies they were born in or these transsexual's folk". The struggle is to bring the body-and how the rest of the world sees and treat them-into association with who they know that they are. However, there are others among us for whom the answer to that question is not so easy. In fact, they have faced this question many a times from other people who are somehow disturbed that they cannot quickly place them into either the "Boy or a Girl" box.

Zucker (Zucker 1995) enlightened that in a world that only sees two possibilities of a human gender; they are often regarded with suspicion, as if something was not quiet right. Many suffer name-calling and out right violence against them are not uncommon. These are people who see themselves and are seen by others as neither man nor women, but something else-more like a third gender.

Most of us are perfectly comfortable with the fact that we are male or female. In fact we normally never give it a thought. However, there are a very few people who would tell that they were born with the wrong body. Gupta

(Gupta 2000) describes that in many cases these people, referred to as transsexuals, remember feeling this way even in childhood. Similarly, Herdt (Herdt, 1994) clarifies that when the feeling becomes strong enough, the person may seek surgery to remove or alter his/her external genitalia or take hormones to make them appear like the other sex. These extreme measures are accompanied by discomfort and risk and cannot be taken because of an urge. Rather, transsexuals take such drastic measures because their feelings to have been born in the opposite sex are very strong and consistent.

Societies set precise roles for males and females and rigorously observe and appraise their behavior on these measures. Society expects males to behave in masculine way and female to behave in feminine way. While establishing and assigning roles for males and females it forgets to set a strategy of behavior for those individuals whose gender is not in accordance with their sex and they are the Male-to-Female gender dysphorics. Kerlin, and Dana (2002) elucidates that suffering from gender discomfort and gender conflict they live a perplexed life. Wyndzen, (Wyndzen, 2000) in her study explains that society without realizing and understanding their inconsistent situation expects male behavior from these Male-to-Female gender dysphorics whereas he is born with feminine gender. This creates a conflict within his self, giving him rather more of a rebellious nature against society, resultantly enhancing his feminine tendencies. On the

other hand, to avoid continuous criticism, ridicule and slur they do not often display their real self that they are aware of. Such is particular in Pakistan where it is difficult to overlook the impact of culture and religion on the “public self” and “private self” of the person when talking about Male-to-Female gender dysphoric.

Mostly people do not differentiate between gender identity disorder and gender dysphoria and they use the terms interchangeably. Watson (Watson 1997) refers that “Gender Identity Disorder” is a term, encompassing a variety of conditions relating to gender identity. According to Coleman (Coleman 1992) some individuals may feel the need to manifest certain attributes of the opposing sex through behaviors such as cross-dressing, without ever feeling the need to actually become a member of the opposite sex while “Gender dysphoria” is the distress felt by transsexuals who are unhappy with their biological sex. Dreger, (Dreger, 1998) described the tremendous agony, including the social isolation suffered by individuals who perceive their bodies as incongruent with their subjective sense of who they really are. Persons suffering from gender dysphoria have confusion or discomfort about their birth gender.

This occurrence is also extended to actual effects on the person, resulting in an almost total change of his life style and public identity. Gender dysphoria had been and would always be a central feature of their existence. It would not 'grow out of' or could not be removed by therapy.

The relative frequency of the occurrence of Gender dysphoria is not accurately known, because of the social stigma attached to being transsexual, arising from a widespread lack of awareness of the true nature of the condition. It is something that is often kept hidden. Therefore, it is not possible to collect statistic on the numbers of declared transsexuals and such figures undoubtedly represent only a proportion of those affected. Bailey, (Bailey, 2003) stated that not very long ago estimate of the rate of occurrence of male-to-female Gender Dyphoric might have been around one in 100,000 of the male population. Today, with

greater awareness and openness that exists, some estimates now put the figure at greater than one in 10,000. It is known that other chromosomal or inter sexes condition can have rates of occurrences approaching, one in 1,000 of the population and it may well be that this is also the true order for degree of transsexuality, velocity of occurrence of known female-to-male transsexuals is significantly lower. Typically being around 3-4 of the rate for male-to-female transsexuals but this rate has varied somewhat with time and between different parts of the world. Christine (2004) elucidates that this suggests that varying cultural factors might play a role in the decision to be open about the condition. Genders dysphoric do not feel belonging to the gender to which they are assigned and they opt for a change. (Fakhar, 1993)

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research was to investigate the opinion of University Scholars about gender dysphorics. The researcher was interested to examine whether highly educated people knew the meanings of (local term Hijra) gender dysphoria. The researcher aimed to explore the major factors that these scholars considered responsible for gender dysphoria. The study also aimed at investigating whether education that implied information, awareness and broad mindedness had brought about any change in their behavior about gender dysphorics. Lastly the researcher wants to know whether these scholars have some Information about the “Nmaz-e-Janaza” (Muslims’ Funeral Prayers) and Burial of Gender Dyphorics.

Methods

Thirty-six post-graduate Professors and Associate Professors with ages ranging between forty to fifty five years, who were working as Chairmen/Chairpersons in thirty- six different Departments and Colleges of the University of Peshawar, were selected depending on their willingness and availability.

Procedure

The researcher with two of her aides, paid separate visit to all participants and every one of them was contacted as planned beforehand. The aim and objective of the research was

briefly explained to them and they were also assured about the confidentiality of their responses, before administering a specially designed questionnaire, asking them to fill in the blanks in the questionnaire as their replies.

The questionnaire was a specially designed instrument having six parts. The first part consisted of eleven statements that dealt with the background information about the participant's age, socio-economic status, marital status, education, income, parent's education and their occupation etc. The second part was for the participant's general knowledge of gender dysphoria (Hijra) and it consisted of eight statements. The third part consisted of four questions for finding out as to how they defined gender dysphoria. The fourth part consisted of seven questions about the social status and social rights of Hijras. The fifth and sixth part consisted of eleven questions for finding out their knowledge of the rituals following a Hijras death and his burial. These questions were pre-tested and revised prior to their use in the investigation.

Results

The section provided information about the general awareness of highly educated people about the term Hijra (gender dysphoric), their opinion about Hijras, and the major factors responsible for this condition. These findings were presented in a tabulated form.

Similarly Table-1 illustrated highly educated group of the society that most of the participants had studied up to M.Phil. level (55.5%) whereas 44.4% had Doctorate degrees.

Figure-1 explains that when the participants were asked to explain the meanings of "Hijra" (gender dysphoric), the purpose being to investigate whether they could differentiate between gender dysphorics and other categories of gender dysphoria, the results showed 33% of them thought "Hijra" (gender dysphorics) as "asexual", 25% said that they were "hermaphrodites, 14% considered them "half man half woman" and "mentally disturbed people". The figure-1 clearly indicated that even University scholars were unsure of this term/condition and they categorized different physical and mental states of gender dysphorics

under the heading- Hijra.

The participants were asked about the definition of Hijra "Female soul in a male body", results of figure-2 showed that only 44% of the University scholars could define "Hijra" (gender dysphoric) as "female soul in a male body", while 22% of them did not agree with this definition. Amongst them 33% were unable to define gender dysphoria being not very clear about the term / condition. The data evidently pointed out that even the highly educated group in Pakistan could not correctly define Hijra (gender dysphoric) and was unable to describe their correct situation.

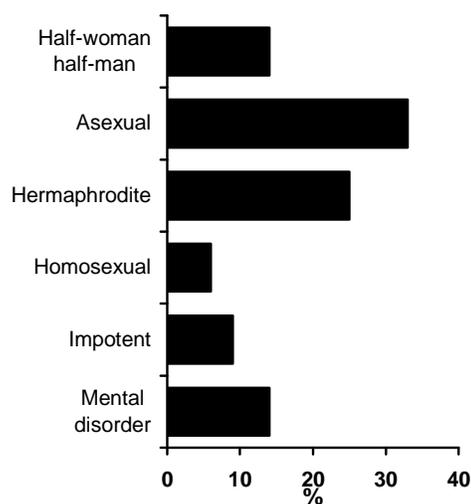


Fig.1: Opinion of University Scholars about Gender Dysphoria (N=36)

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Causes for Gender Dysphoria (N=36)

| Causes for Gender Dysphoria | n | % |
|-------------------------------------|----|------|
| Lack of proper guidance | 18 | 50% |
| Rejection by parents | 6 | 17% |
| Lack of parental religious guidance | 5 | 14% |
| Less dominating father | 7 | 19% |
| Total | 36 | 100% |

Table -2 Frequency and Percentage of Hesitation during Interaction with Gender Dysphorics (N=36)

| Responses | n | % |
|-----------|----|------|
| Yes | 20 | 66% |
| No | 16 | 34% |
| Total | 36 | 100% |

Table -2 clearly indicates the results related to the question when asked to give other causes they knew of, besides natural or medical, for a person to be a "Hijra". About 50% of them

mentioned lack of proper parental guidance being the major one, while 19% blamed the submissive status of their fathers. Parental rejection by 17% and lack of proper religious teaching and guidance by 14% of them were ascribed as important factors for gender dysphoria.

Table-3 indicated that when the University scholars were asked whether it was easier for them to interact with a “Hijra” s majority of them (66%) showed their disenchantment. because Hijras in our society were regarded as an inferior class and people felt degraded in interacting with them.

Table –4 indicates the general information of the scholars about the Namaz-e-Janaza and burial of “Hijra” (gender dysphoric). Majority of the participants (53%) showed complete surprise and stated that they had never heard or seen of this before and further said that they were totally unaware about these events of a Hijra life. 42% thought these to be as like the normal people. Only 5% replied that no Namaz-e-Janaza and burial of Hijras were conducted.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Information about the Namaz-E-Janaza and Burial of Gender Dysphorics (N=36)

| Responses | n | % |
|-----------------------|----|------|
| Same as normal people | 15 | 42% |
| Not offered | 2 | 5% |
| Not seen/heard | 19 | 53% |
| Total | 36 | 100% |

Discussion

The results confirmed the assumption that even highly educated scholars had no clear concept of gender dysphoria (Hijra) and were totally ill-informed about the types, causes and factors responsible for gender dysphoria. The results of the study was in line with Doorn, (2003) who stated that misconceptions about gender dysphorics depends on two things, firstly the lack of proper information and awareness of people about this special group of people and secondly, the most important one is the shortage or even presence of suitable terminologies for different anomalies.

The data evidently pointed out that even the highly educated group in Pakistan could not correctly define Hijra (gender dysphorics) and

was able to describe their correct situation.

The sources of information about Hijra were different among different scholars. Majority of the respondents obtained information through social interaction, through television, magazines and newspapers, movies, and through books and circus, same results were shown by Whitten , Patisaul ,and Young (Whitten , Patisaul ,and Young 2002).

The exact opinion about transsexuals was difficult, as there were a number of opinions from different scholars, they think that gender dysphorics are abnormal or unbalanced persons some call them impotent, for few they are the source of entertainment, while some describe them as non-entities and as hermaphrodites. Some scholars think that they are unable to perform anything, in their opinion they don't have sexual capabilities and are born with feminine characteristics only a little percentage call them normal human beings-

In a response to queries about the causes of gender dysphoria, the role of the parents in understanding their children was the most important point that came out from the group. According to them Pakistan was an under-developed country where parents sometimes failed to provide the basic necessities to their children because they were not well informed and well trained in understanding their emotional needs. The results are in line with Govorun (Govorun 2000) who explains that it was very difficult for the parents of poor and large families to give individual attention to each of their children. The participants thus concluded that one of the major reasons of gender dysphorics for their joining Hijra community was the rejection by their parents that most of them faced the idea was also supported by Winter (Winter 2002).

Most of the scholars were totally unaware about the Namaz-e-Janaza of gender dysphorics as some scholars said that their Namaz-e-Janaza was offered at night in the darkness, while some thought that their Namaz-e-Janaza was never offered at all, and the living Hijra curse his soul to be reborn as a Hijra. Some respondents were sure that that their Namaz-e-Janaza was offered in the normal manner like any other normal gender while some of them

had not ever seen/heard of this or gave no response about their Namaz-e-Janaza.

Conclusion

It was concluded that the educated class of our society realizes the problems of transsexuals. This class does not have much information about transsexuals and that is why it has different concepts about transsexuals. The image of transsexuals in the minds of the educated is not satisfactory yet still they want to treat them positively.

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