

# Social Anxiety Among Transgenders

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## **Abstract :**

Gender is societal attribution and refers to an identity. Most aspects of masculine or feminine characteristics are taught by society and are learnt by individuals. The term transgender signifies a person who is either male or female. Transgender individuals face numerous difficulties in their everyday life. So, the present study has focused on the social anxiety of male to female transgenders. The objective of the study is to find out the level of social anxiety of transgenders. They were assessed with the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation (BFNE) Scale (Watson & Friend, 1969). The results indicated a high level of social anxiety of the transgender individuals in the current life situation.

**Keywords :** Transgenders, social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation.

## **Introduction:**

Gender is a term that is referred to as 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" (Forsyth, & Copes, 2013).

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 (Rafeek, 2015).

The transgender exists 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, 'berdachas' 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 (Attilio & Otis-green, 2011).

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-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 centres and central nervous system (CNS) during the early stages of pregnancy. If something goes amiss in the early stage the usual action on the hormones do not fetus's brain. In these cases, children by born with brain. In these on their integration of the 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 (Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties, Karnataka [PUCL-K], 2003).

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 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 other feelings such as fear, anger, restlessness,

irritability, depression, or other diffuse and nameless feelings (PUCL-K,2001). Perceived loneliness among adolescents

### **Problem Statement:**

Do transgender's experience social anxiety?

### **Hypotheses:**

1. Transgenders would experience a high level of social anxiety.
2. At Age which would significantly correlate to social anxiety among transgenders.

### **Method :**

Ex post facto research design aimed to find out the level of social anxiety of transgenders. This study used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data .

### **Sample :**

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

### **Inclusion criteria:**

Transgender's those who had completed under graduation.  
Transgenders those who had converted to male to female.

### **Exclusion criteria:**

Transgender those who are Bisexuals.

### **Sample characteristic:**

The participants consisted of 25 trans- women. They were aged between 21 years to 25 years. The mean age of the participants was 21.83 years (SD = 0.86). All participants had completed graduation. The socioeconomic status of the family was mostly middle class.

### **Measure :**

The Brief Fear of Negative evaluation scale used to assess the level of social anxiety (Fear of Negative Evaluation) developed by Watson & Friend, 1969. The Brief Fear of Negative evaluation scale-revised from original scale evaluation indicates the extent to which each item describes himself or herself on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5.

The scale was used frequently to assess social anxiety research studies. The tool is simple to use and easy to assess fear of negative evaluation of transgenders. This tool was used in prior studies by Kisha and Bala in the Indian population to find out the social Balachandran (2013) anxiety of transgenders. So, this tool was used in the current study

### **Results:**

Descriptive analysis was used to find out mean and stand deviation for social anxiety of transgender's

### **Table 1: Mean and SDs of the social anxiety of transgenders**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Possible range of scores
Social anxiety	25	41.56	11.62	12-60

Table 1 indicates that transgenders experience a high level of social anxiety. A higher score indicates a greater measure of the variable. Therefore, hypothesis 1 which states that transgenders would experience high level of social anxiety was accepted.

**Table 2 : Correlation between age and school anxiety**

Variable	Mean	SD	R(Social anxiety)
Age	41.56	11.619	.071(NS)

Table 2 : shows the social anxiety of the transgenders with regards to the age. There is no significant relationship between age and social anxiety of the transgenders. Therefore hypothesis 2 which states that age would be significantly correlated on social anxiety among the transgenders was rejected.

### **Discussion:**

The study clearly indicated that there was a high level of social anxiety among transgenders. It may be due to the fact that societies deep rooted fear of sexual and gender non-consistency manifests itself in the refusal of basic citizenship rights to these communities including suitable housing facilities (Lombardi, Wilchins, Esq, & Malouf 2002).

Transgenders get affected in a multipart like physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment. Most of the transgenders not completely accepted. They contact with either one or only a few of their family members. Some of the items from brief fear of negative evaluation scale which transgenders scored high were:

Item 1: I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference.

Item 3: I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings.

Item 8: when I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me

These findings supported by previous research studies suggesting that Zashikhina and Hagglof (2014) concluded specific factors that might contribute moderate to high levels of quality of life in adolescents, such as gender role nonconformity, discrimination, victimization, and decreased social support.

It was found that age and social anxiety were not significantly correlated with 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 that transgenders experience high levels of social anxiety and age of the transgenders did not mitigate the level of social anxiety.

**Limitation :**

The study was ex post facto in nature social cause and effect relationship could not be adequately established.

The study was confined to only one registered community - based organization .

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