

A Study of Attitude of Society towards Transgender in South India

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Abstract: *This article comparatively examines the relationship between attitude of youths and attitude of adults towards transgender to identify the significant difference in the research variables. For these purpose 100 UG boys and 100 UG girls from Science and Arts colleges selected also 100 men and 100 women from Chennai North and Thiruvallur districts at random sampling technique. Survey method is adopted by administering the tool of five point scale. The study focused on the data collected through Rating Scales and the study measured the attitude of society towards transgender. The data collected from the tools were subjected to various statistical analyses. The results of the analysis were presented in the form of tables and charts also interpreted appropriately to arrive at logical Findings and Conclusions. It is found that on the basis of findings, the adult women (not college students) have had better attitude towards transgender, particularly religion does not play any role.*

Keywords: Attitude, MTF Transgender, FTM Transgender, Inclusion

1. Introduction

In order to achieve the objective it is necessary to understand the psychological issues and challenges they face as well as examine the prevailing attitudes in the society. A major challenge in the mobilisation process has been motivating the transgender to actively demand rights and services. There has been some progressive steps taken to improve their quality of life but this has come after years of crushing social stigmatisation, abuse and general derision from the wider community. As one transgender put it "They make documentaries about us and say all these interesting things, but when we walk out on the street we still get the calling and the whistles". The most accepted definition currently for the term transgender seems to be "People who were assigned a gender, usually at birth and based on their genitals, but who feel that this is a false or incomplete description of them" (USI LGBT Campaign Transgender Campaign, 2007). It is often used as an umbrella term to mean those who defy rigid, binary gender constructions, and who express or present a breaking and/or luring of culturally prevalent/stereotypical gender roles. Transgendered persons usually live full or part time in the gender role opposite to the one in which they were born. In contemporary usage, "transgender" is used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including but not limited to: pre-operative, post-operative and non-operative transsexual people; male and female cross-dressers (sometimes referred to as "transvestites", "drag queens", or "drag kings"); intersex individuals; and men and women, regardless of sexual orientation, whose appearance or characteristics are perceived to be gender atypical. The term transgender does not imply any specific form of sexual orientation; transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual or as bisexual. The term trans man refers to female-to-male (F2M) transgender people, and trans woman refers to male-to-female (M2F) transgender people. Some transgender individuals experience their gender identity as incongruent with their anatomical sex and may seek some degree of sex reassignment surgery, take hormones or undergo other cosmetic procedures. Others may pursue gender expression (masculine or feminine) through external

self-presentation and behavior. An attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for something. Attitudes are generally, positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event. Attitudes are judgments which develop on the ABC model (affect, behavior, and cognition). The *affective* response is an emotional response that expresses an individual's degree of preference for an entity. The *behavioral* intention is a verbal indication or typical behavioral tendency of an individual. The *cognitive* response is a cognitive evaluation of the entity that constitutes an individual's beliefs about the object. Most attitudes are the result of either direct experience or observational learning from the environment. An attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for something. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event. Attitudes are judgments which develop on the ABC model (affect, behavior, and cognition). The *affective* response is an emotional response that expresses an individual's degree of preference for an entity. The *behavioral* intention is a verbal indication or typical behavioral tendency of an individual. The *cognitive* response is a cognitive evaluation of the entity that constitutes an individual's beliefs about the object. Most attitudes are the result of either direct experience or observational learning from the environment. Unchecked negative attitudes toward transgender persons may result in transphobia as well as discriminatory treatment of transgender individuals. In our country there is a bias against transgender and a fair amount of ignorance. The common man in India is exposed more to eunuchs. There is a lot of prejudice against eunuchs in our society and they face a huge amount of job discrimination and are often forced to beg. There are people with a wide range of transgender-related identities, cultures, or experiences including Hijras, Aravanis, Kothis, Jogtas/Jogappas, and Shiv-Shakthis. In Tamil Nadu, some Aravani activists want the public and media to use the term 'Thirunangai' to refer to Aravani. These people have been part of the broader culture and treated with great respect, at least in the past, although an estimated one million population in India has been more often socially ostracized. The Constitution provides the fundamental right to equality, and tolerates no

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discrimination on the grounds of sex, caste, creed or religion. The Constitution also guarantees political rights and other benefits to every citizen. But the third community (transgender) continues to be ostracized. (Sathasivam, 2011). They suffer a whole lot of mental, physical and sexual oppression in the society. The health and well-being of transgender people suffers great harm by attitudes of intolerance and hatred toward diverse gender expression. The Report by Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties, Karnataka (September 2003) showed that mainstream society's deep-rooted fear of sexual and gender nonconformity manifests itself in the refusal of basic citizenship rights to these communities. Types of discrimination reported by Hijras/TG communities in the healthcare settings include: deliberate use of male pronouns in addressing Hijras; registering them as 'males' and admitting them in male wards; humiliation faced in having to stand in the male queue; verbal harassment by the hospital staff and co-patients; and lack of healthcare providers who are sensitive to and trained on providing treatment/care to transgender people and even denial of medical services. Hijras/TG communities face several sexual health issues including HIV. Both personal- and contextual- level factors influence sexual health condition and access to and use of sexual health services. For example, most Hijras/TG are from lower socioeconomic status and have low literacy levels that pose barrier to seeking health care. Often, healthcare providers rarely have adequate knowledge about the health issues of sexual minorities. When a transgender is treated like an unequal or is humiliated by the ordinary people, there are not many redressal mechanisms that are available to him. Thus to put an end to all the inhuman behavior towards the transgender community it is very important that reforms are made in the existing laws and the law officers are sensitized to adapt to a complete humanitarian approach while dealing with a person of transgender community. The objective of this study focused on Trend towards Inclusion.

2. Review of Related Literature

Attitude towards Transgender in the Family

Polat, Yuksel, Discigil and Meteris (2005) found that in Turkey, an individual with gender identity disorder is stigmatized and isolated from society. They examined the acceptance of gender identity differences by the families in 47 relatives of 39 transgendered individuals who applied to a psychiatry clinic for sex reassignment. Half of the relatives who came to the interview were mothers. While 85.1% of the families considered themselves as secular muslims, 14.9% were very religious. Gender identity disorder was first noticed during puberty (70.2%) or pre-puberty (17%). In 63.8% it was remarked that it was a shocking experience. One-third of them felt responsible for it. While 65.9% tried to change the situation by coercion, only 27.7% adopted a supportive attitude. The majority of families tried to conceal the situation from their immediate environment and one-third did not even inform their closest relatives. For half of relatives the mass media was their only source of information whereas one-third received information from doctors. 40.4% of the families accepted the transgendered identity and approved the sex reassignment surgery as a final step.

Winter (2006) had 195 MTF transgender with a mean age of 25.4 years, complete a questionnaire examining, their beliefs about (a) attitudes (of parents and society) towards them (and to MTF transgender in general); and (b) origins of their own MTF status. It was found that 62.9% of mothers and 40.6% of fathers accepted or encouraged their child's transgender from its first expression. Cluster analysis revealed that, based on their beliefs, 97.1% of the sample could be divided into three groups. Most (61.2%) fell into a 'biogenic' group, emphasizing the role played by inborn biology, while 29.4% believed took a 'peer psychogenic' view, emphasizing the role played by friends in the development of their transgender. A small 'eclectic' group (6.5%) believed that biology, karma and parents combined to account for their transgender.

Ryan et al (2010) shows that accepting behaviors of parents and caregivers towards their LGBT children are protective against mental health risks. LGBT young adults who reported high levels of family acceptance during adolescence had significantly higher levels of self-esteem, social support and general health, compared to peers with low levels of family acceptance. LGBT young adults who reported low levels of family acceptance during adolescence were over three times more likely to have suicidal thoughts and to report suicide attempts, compared to those with high levels of family acceptance. High religious involvement in families was strongly associated with low acceptance of LGBT children.

Attitude towards transgender in Society

According to the results of a national survey released at the Southern Comfort Transgender Conference in **Atlanta (2002)** seven out of ten people included in the report, "Public Perceptions of Transgender People," say they are familiar with the word transgender. A majority of respondents believe it is "all right" to be transgendered. Fifty percent of those surveyed believe transgendered adults should be allowed to teach in high schools, but only about 40% believe they should be allowed to be elementary school, gym class, or day care teachers or scouting leaders. 74% say they would be OK working with a transgendered person; 61% favour laws to prevent workplace discrimination; and 68% support hatecrimes laws that cover transgendered people. After respondents were given the definition of what it means to be transgendered- an exercise that is considered an abbreviated form of education- they had a somewhat less favourable attitude toward transgendered people. Additionally, the poll found a very critical correlation between whether the public sees being transgender as a moral issue and whether they think people have a choice about being a transgender.

A poll commissioned by the **Human Rights Campaign Foundation Campaign (2002)** showed that 61 percent of Americans believe that the country needs laws to protect transgender people from discrimination. It is estimated that at least 15 transgender people are killed each year in hate-based attacks, although this number may be higher based on transgender people's common fear of going to the police and widespread misreporting. Anti-transgender discrimination also occurs in housing, credit and public accommodations.

Medley (2005) investigated the attitudes toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people from the point of view of heterosexual males who attended private institutions. Data was collected through the dissemination of the GLBT Attitude Assessment at four private colleges. Males who held conservative beliefs in their political and religious orientations were significantly different than those who held liberal and moderate beliefs. Respondents' attitudes were least positive toward transgender people.

Rye, Elmslie and Chalmers (2007) assert that negative attitudes toward transsexuals may be transformed into positive and empathic ones. They proposed that a basic formula to produce more positive attitudes is a simple one: education plus exposure – that is to say, “real life” exposure. Meeting a transgender person face-to-face, even in a classroom setting, can have a positive impact on those who hold transphobic attitudes resulting from ignorance of transgender issues. Such an experience may also have a strong effect on a student who was personally questioning his or her gender and perhaps dealing with some of the same issues being discussed.

Antoszewski, Kasielska, Jędrzejczak and Kruk-Jeromin (2007) aimed to determine the extent of the knowledge and the approach of Lodz college students toward transsexualism and to find out what rights students would grant to transsexual persons. The questionnaire studies were carried out in a group of 300 students. About 53.6% of the students gave correct answer to the definition of transsexualism. Most of the students thought that transsexuals should have the possibility of legal change of name (67%) or undergoing hormonal therapy (70%) and surgical treatment (63.5%). Student's attitude toward legal and surgical sex change in transsexuals was positive. Female students showed greater understanding of transsexual needs than male students. **Winter (2007)** and his team of researchers looked at transphobia in seven countries. The results of a factor analysis identified core attitudes and beliefs. Five factors were identified together explaining 52.1% of variance. They were, 1) the belief that transwomen suffer from a mental sickness; 2) the belief that transwomen are not women, should not be treated as such, and should not be afforded rights as women; 3) rejection of contact with transwomen in a variety of social situations, including among family members and teachers; 4) rejection of contact with transwomen within one's peer group, and 5) the belief that transwomen engage in sexually deviant behaviour. Particularly strong, and fairly consistent across the seven countries involved, were the links between, on one hand, the belief that transwomen suffer from a mental sickness and, on the other hand, the refusal to regard or treat them as women or to afford them rights as women, as well as an unwillingness to accept the idea of any social contact with them at all, either within one's family group or outside.

King, Winter and Webster (2009) examined the relationship between Hong Kong Chinese people's contact with transgender/transsexual (TG/TS) people and attitudes toward transgenderism and transgender civil rights, based on Allport's contact hypothesis. With a random sample of 856 Hong Kong Chinese persons aged between 15 and 64 they used the Chinese Attitudes towards Transgenderism and

Transgender Civil Rights Scale (CATTGRS). Attitudes, assessed on both personal and institutional dimensions, were examined in relation to participants' gender, age, educational level, religiosity, and previous contact with transpeople. Results suggest that previous contact with transpeople was significantly associated with attitudes reflected in the scale; decreased social distance, decreased social discrimination, and decreased transprejudice, increased awareness of discrimination against transpeople, increased support for equal opportunities, increased support for post-operative transsexual civil rights, and increased support for anti-discrimination legislation.

Gerhardstein (2010) investigated factors that contribute to negative attitudes toward, and discrimination against this consistently marginalized group of people. The sample included 251 heterosexual undergraduate students, including 131 men and 120 women. Participants rated one of two vignettes, which were paired with one of four different pictures. The vignettes described either a male-to-female or female-to-male transsexual, and the corresponding picture depicted an individual whose appearance was stereotypically consistent with either the vignette character's post-operative sex or his or her biological sex. Participants reported more positive general perceptions and more positive evaluations of the transsexual character's attractiveness as a friend or romantic partner when his/her appearance was congruent with the desired sex. Compared to women, men rated the transsexual character more negatively. There was also a significant interaction for gender of the participant and sex of the transsexual, such that females rated the attractiveness of the FTM transsexual significantly more positively than the MTF transsexual, whereas men's attractiveness ratings for the FTM and MTF transsexuals were not significantly different.

3. Need for the Study

Down the ages, our society has condemned and alienated people who do not conform to its norms. Transgender persons are one such group of people who have been marginalized in many societies. Leading a life as a transgender is far from easy because such people can be neither categorized as male nor as female and this deviation is "unacceptable" to society's vast majority. Trying to eke out a dignified living is even worse. Research shows that transgender are even overlooked by the rest of the LGBT community. Transgender still float beneath the surface, most of them invisible, like the unseen portion of the iceberg. One of the important problems transgender face in the society is lack of social acceptance. Although they have been part of every culture and society in recorded human history, they have only recently become the focus of attention in psychological, medical and social research. Unchecked negative attitudes toward transgender persons may result in transphobia as well as discriminatory treatment of transgender individuals (Claman, 2008). As The (2002) puts it, ignorance is one of the reasons why people are prejudiced against transsexuals. As the visibility of transgender increases it is time to help them join the main stream of society. In order to achieve this objective it is necessary to understand the psychological issues and challenges they face as well as examine the prevailing attitudes in the society. A

major challenge in the mobilisation process has been motivating the transgender to actively demand rights and services. There has been some progressive steps taken to improve their quality of life but this has come after years of crushing social stigmatisation, abuse and general derision from the wider community. As one transgender put it "They make documentaries about us and say all these interesting things, but when we walk out on the street we still get the calling and the whistles." The study will also empirically examine the possibility of making a shift in the attitude by dealing with some of the unexpressed fears towards this gender variant group. Discrimination is the anti-thesis of equality, and it is the duty of all right minded citizens to drive away discriminatory practices from all walks of life (Shukla, 2011).

4. Statement of the Problem

What is the attitude of college students and adults towards transgender in South India.

5. Objective of the Study

- 1) To find out the difference in the attitude of college students and adults towards transgender
- 2) To find out the level of attitude of college students towards transgender.
- 3) To find out the level of attitude of adults towards transgender.
- 4) To find out the relationship between the attitude and demographical variables viz.,
(a) sex (b) stage (c) gender difference
(d) religion

6. Hypotheses

- 1) There will be no significant difference between college students and young adults in their attitude towards transgender
- 2) There will be a significant difference between overall sex in the attitude towards transgender.
- 3) There will be a significant difference between female and male college students in their attitude towards transgender
- 4) There will be a significant difference between adult men and women in their attitude towards transgender
- 5) Religion will not have a significant influence in the attitude towards transgender.

7. Research Design

It was a survey study; here age, sex and religion of the participants were the independent variables. The dependent variable was their attitude towards transgender.

Sample

200 college going students, 100 boys and 100 girls between 18 and 19 years and who studied in the First and Second year in an arts and science college were contacted after obtaining permission from the college authorities. 200 adults in the age group of 30 to 50 years with 100 men and 100

women were considered. The students and adults were from the same geographic area altogether 400 samples were selected at Random Sampling Technique.

8. Tools Used

Examining the attitude of college students and adults towards transgender the following tools were used.

8.1 Newspaper reports

A sample of 23 newspaper reports on transgender collected from 2010 to 2016 were analysed to study their problems, attitude of society towards them and governmental initiatives to improve their standard of living.

8.2 Attitude towards Transgender Questionnaire

Information collected from informal interviews with a group of students and from the articles featured in newspapers was used to prepare items for the questionnaire. A total of 17 items were formulated. It was decided to use a four point rating scale to avoid the tendency to choose the middle term. In addition there was one item where the respondent's awareness level had to be rated on a five point scale from "very low" to "very high" The prepared questions were then given to experts in the field of psychology and social work for examining the appropriateness of the items. Two more items were suggested by the experts who modified a few items to make it simpler and easier to comprehend. The final scale had 19 items and one item on subjective rating of transgender awareness. Reliability of the questionnaire was established by test retest method. The questionnaire was administered as a pilot study to a group of students (N=50) who were once again made to respond to the same questions after a gap of two day weeks. It was found that the reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and the validity was 0.91 so the internal consistency was found to be Good.

9. Data Collection

The students were asked to answer the questionnaire in their classrooms. Care was taken to see that they responded without consulting one another. In the case of adults, the questionnaire was given to them individually at their homes or at their work spots.

10. Limitations of the Study

Geographically, sample area selected was Chennai and Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu.

- 1) The investigator restricted her research study only to rural area of Thiruvallur and Chennai North.
- 2) The attitude towards transgender has not been related to the participant's prior experiences or exposure to transgender.

11. Data Analysis

In the present study, the following statistical techniques were used.

- Descriptive Analysis (Mean, Standard Deviation)

• Differential Analysis (t - values)

Group (Age)	N	Mean	SD	t
Youths	200	37.57	4.39	5.54
Adults	200	44.07	7.96	P<0.01

The above table shows the comparison of attitude toward transgender in college students and young adults. The mean value shows that there is a significant difference between the two groups (t=5.54, p<0.01) where adults are better than youths. The hypothesis states that there will be no significant difference between college students and young adults in their attitude towards transgender is rejected.

Group (Overall Sex)	N	Mean	SD	t
Male (Boys & Men)	200	43.66	7.89	4.89
Female (Girls & Women)	200	37.78	4.79	P<0.01

The above table shows that there is a significant difference between male and female in their attitude towards transgender. (t=4.89, p<0.01) where female is better than male. The hypothesis states that there will be a significant sex difference in the attitude towards transgender is accepted.

Group (Sex)	N	Mean	SD	t
College Boys	100	37.81	4.62	0.46
College Girls	100	37.29	4.19	
Adult Men	100	49.90	5.49	8.36
Adult Women	100	38.23	5.32	P<0.01

The above table shows that there is no significant difference in the attitude of the transgender between college boys and college girls. The hypothesis “there will be a significant difference between female and male college students in their attitude towards transgender” stands rejected. There is a significant difference in the attitude of transgender between adult men and adult women (t=8.36, p<0.01) where adult men having a more favourable attitude towards the transgender than adult women. So hypothesis “there will be a significant difference between adult men and adult women in their attitude towards transgender” is accepted.

Group (Religion)	N	Mean	SD	t
Christians	175	40.95	7.51	0.27
Hindus	225	40.57	6.61	

The above table shows the attitude of the respondents categorized according to their religion. It is observed that there is no significant difference between Christians and Hindu respondents. So the hypothesis “religion will not be a significant influence in the attitude towards transgender” is accepted.

Subjective Rating of Transgender Awareness

	College Students		Adults	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very Low	44	22	20	10
Low	80	40	80	40
Moderate	76	38	90	45
High	---	---	10	5

The above table shows the level of awareness about transgender among students and adults. College students have rated their awareness on the topic of transgender to be lower than the adults since 22% of them have said that their awareness is very low while 40% feel that their awareness is low. In comparison with the adults where 10% feel that their awareness is very low and 40% say that their awareness is low. It is interesting to note that 5 % of the adults have rated their awareness level to be high. These results partly explain why the students have a less favourable attitude than the adults as discussed previously.

12. Findings of the Study

- 1) There is a significant difference between college students and adults in their attitude towards transgender. Adults have a significantly more favourable attitude towards transgender than the college students.
- 2) There is a significant difference in overall sex between male and female in their attitude towards transgender where female have a significantly more favourable attitude towards transgender than male.
- 3) There is no significant difference between college boys and college girls also there is a significant difference in adult men and adult women in attitude towards transgender where adult men have more favourable attitude towards transgender than adult women.
- 4) There is no significant difference between people related with religions namely Christianity and Hinduism.

13. Conclusion

In some of the previous studies females were found to have a more favourable attitude to gender variant groups. Gerhardtstein (2010) found that compared to women, men rated the transsexual character more negatively. According to Antoszewski et al. (2007) female students showed greater understanding of transsexual needs than male students. The result of this study does not conform to the earlier findings since the adult male had a significantly more favourable attitude than the adult female. However no significant sex difference was found between college boys and college girls. Adults had a more positive attitude towards the transgender when compared to the college students. This differs from Landen and Innala’s (2000) findings that younger people held significantly more positive attitudes than the older age groups with regard to transgenderism and transsexuality. It is also differs from Harvey’s study (2002) where no significant difference in the attitudes towards transsexuals in the United States, was found between younger and older people. Religion does not have a significant influence in the attitude towards transgender.

14. Suggestion

The negative attitudes held by people can help us understand the barriers faced by them in gaining social acceptance. Future awareness programmes should focus on removing these barriers. Better understanding of the problems and challenges faced by transgender will help in bringing about the changes in policies and give them their due rights. The results of the study, both quantitative and qualitative,

provide guidelines for counseling the transgender. Counselors should be given more exposure to dealing with sex variant groups especially the transgender.

Author Profile

Dr. B. Golden Kisha, M.Sc(Psy), M.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D(Psy) is a recipient of Gold Medal from His Excellency C.Vidyasagar Rao, Governor of Tamil Nadu also RCI registered Special Educator and has an excellent achievements in sports career. She has a very rich teaching experience over 12 years in various reputed schools and colleges in Chennai. She is presently serving as the Principal of Nazareth College of Education for Women, Avadi, Chennai. The author in simple terms, believes, "Educated Exalted Everywhere".