

Transgender Identity: Perception and Representation

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Abstracts: In accordance with Transgender Theory, my study reveals living experiences of TGs like: self perception of TGs, behaviours and activities, consciousness of difference, exposure of identity, involvement process in BDS, challenges and management after "Coming Out", behaviours of societies, etc. In the similar respect, the theory of stigmatized Individual and Process of identity also has been applied in order to expose the identity of TGs in the society basing on the same sex attraction. In addition with these, The theory of Symbolic Interactionism has been implemented so as to show that the TGs are identifying them through the action-interaction with the other non-TGs of the societies as they are participating different programmes with cross-dressing and so on. To some extent, the open society at present, political change, institution like BDS, majority of Hindus are some of the reasons for TGs' attempts to come out nowadays. To understand gender only biological sex is not adequate, so, along with it gender should be understood based on the mental feelings. If the knowledge about TGs were included in the course study of schools/ colleges, the TGs would get TG-friendly environment, which would allow them to have their study smoothly. The non-TGs would not dominate TGs and "We" feeling could be installed in the society. It can be said that the TGs are boosted with their involvement in BDS. The TGs were repressed in the society before but nowadays they are aware about the domination and are able to protest against the injustice done upon them. Nowadays, some of the TGs are able to live in their desired roles to some extent but many are still living lives with dual identity

1. Background of the study

Gender identity is the one's private sense of being a male or a female in general and primarily consists of acceptance of membership in a particular group of people: male or female. Societies have a set of gender categories that can serve as the basis of the formation of a social identity in relation to other members of society. In most societies, there is a basic division between gender attributes assigned to males and females. However, some individuals do not identify with the gender that is assigned to their biological sex. Some societies have so-called third gender categories that can be used as a basis for a gender identity by persons who are uncomfortable with the gender that is usually associated with their sex. According to different scholars the term transgender is defined in the following manners:

The term transgender is generally used to refer to individuals whose gender identity or expression does not confirm to the social expectations for their sex assigned at birth.

Currah, Juang & Minter, 2006

Similarly,

In the global context, the term "transgender" is relatively new, dating from late 1980s, and it was not until the mid-1990s that it was used in its current popular sense as an umbrella term that refers to all gender-variant people.

(Boswell, 1991)

All human beings need their identity to make them recognize. Even in the recent time Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) are also making many efforts to have included them in different categories of sexes demanding for their identity as equal citizens. Since the realization of their real identity these LGBTs are fighting hard against the conventional society which does not accept the existence of them and regards them unnatural. In the same manner, under the umbrella term of LGBT, transgender identity is also highlighted in the recent years. TGs, in one way or the other, are trying to follow the process of "Coming Out" and establish themselves as the part of the society despite the thousands of obstacles on their way. They are known about the complexities of opening themselves in the society. Despite this fact, for the sake of presenting themselves with their real identity their struggle is going on.

2. Research Question

- How do TG people expose themselves in public places?
- How do TG people perceive and identify themselves in a society?
- Why are they finding it significant to be exposed in such roles?
- How does family of transgender perceive and treat them?
- What are the differentiation in the perception and treatment of society towards female to male and male to female transgender?
- What are the attitudes of peer groups (Transgender, Non transgender) of TGs towards them?

3. Objectives of the study

- ❖ To explore transgender people's self- perception and self-representation (Practice) about themselves.
- ❖ To find out the perception of society towards transgender.

4. Research Methodology

- Descriptive Research Design
- Purposive Sampling
- Data Generation Technique
 - Observation
 - Interview
 - Case Study
- Narrative Analysis

5. Analysis

The people who do not possess "physical body, according to mental state and vice versa" desire being called Transgender/ Third gender. Those people prefer to present themselves according to their mental state rather than the physical body. But these people are not being able to come out easily because of the stigmatized view of the society towards them. But also at present because of somehow open society and the institution like BDS, they are daring to come out openly with their real identity and category. Before the establishment of BDS, those people were compelled to live with their suppressed desires. But their arrival to BDS through their friends, relatives and media has opened them to some extent and some are trying to come out through BDS. Despite the involvement in BDS, most of the TGs have not exposed their real identity because of social prestige of family. Therefore, the TGs are not successful completely to present themselves in their desired roles.

Since childhood, TGs have their behaviors and activities, which accord to their opposite sex. But the family, kinship, friends and neighbors ignore those behaviors and activities and pressurize one to role play on the ground of their physicality by birth. But those TGs cannot fit themselves in the prescribed roles of the society and feel all alone in the society. They perceive negative about themselves and even try for suicidal attempts. According to them to understand gender, only based on biological sex is not enough and with this mental feelings and behaviors are also to be added. The gender constructed by society is not capable to include the TGs. So, they suggest society that there are not only male, female and heterosexual but also the TGs and homosexuals are living in the society. In addition, they say that they are also the gift of nature, which should be understood by every individual.

Almost all of the TGs are experiencing the consciousness about their different feelings than other during their teenage. It is experienced by them through their sexual orientation as well. Though they were known about this difference they didn't share it with anybody other because of fear of being ridiculed and mocked for having/inheriting such difference. It was done so even because the other people would not have believed if the TGs had shared it to them. Most of the TGs live away from their homes in city areas so as to live the desired lives. There too, understanding the situations they expose their real identity and sometimes despite exposing real identities live in their desired roles. While living away from home in one hand they get chance to expose their real identity whereas in another can live with their partner. In this manner, they can live the lives happily.

In case of TGs' presentation in the society they present themselves according to the existing situations, i.e. they expose their real identities if the environment is favorable and TG-friendly otherwise not. They are found living under the prescribed roles of the society. They are still presenting themselves in dual identities. Comparatively the TGMs are found enjoying more liberty than that of TGFs. Likewise among TGs those who are married to opposite sex are living their lives in dilemma and confusion.

It can be said that the relation between TGs and society, after the involvement of TGs in BDS, is having both positive and negative changes. Some TGs are found with positive changes, as the family members have understood them and their desires visiting BDS whereas some other family members in the name of prestige pretend to be unknown despite knowing everything about them. They are found keeping those TGs far away, ignoring and showing no desire to be near to them. While observing the perception of society towards the TGs, the society seems finding difficulties in accepting them easily. The TGs are not allowed to be a part of the society and if ever they attempt, they are seen with derogative and despised attitude. Their behaviors are taken abnormally and are created uncomfortable environment. Generally, the TGs are humiliated with the use of terms like "Hijra" and "Chhakka" and simultaneously are harassed sexually. Very few families are seen bearing positive attitude towards the TGs. Moreover, TGFs are ill-behaved and humiliated more in comparison to TGMs because our society is a patriarchal society which entertains the male supremacy. If any female figure is found with masculine behavior, she becomes a matter of praise sometimes she is termed as oversmart too but if any male tries for feminine behavior, he is condemned and ridiculed. In these terms and conditions, most of the TGs are compelled to suppress and repress their desired lives and more than this their attempt for presenting themselves in their desired roles pushes them towards the exclusion from the society as well. Consequently, they are deprived from the different needs like education, employment, etc. and to earn their living they are even found involved in prostitution.

While comparing the TGs of Kathmandu and Dhangadhi, the perception of the society towards them does not vary. The condition of the TGs is also similar as the TGs of both places are treated with the same manners by the society. The only difference is that the TGs in Kathmandu are not easily known because of the overpopulation whereas in Dhangadhi are easily identified because of less population. Though Dhangadhi is composed of multi caste, TGs from Chaudhary community are only exposed in good number. The process of "Coming Out" is similar in both Kathmandu and Dhangadhi as the TGs are exploring themselves through the same institutions i.e. BDS.

6. Conclusion

- * Everyone cannot be adjusted in the norms and values of the society as the knowledge of it is based on the heterosexual but not on the homosexual. Therefore, TGs are lacking favorable environment in their own society.
- * It can be said that to expose the real identity the TGs are found questing for the medium of different institution, which can create favorable or TG-friendly environment for them. In addition, BDS was found giving a good platform to TGs to live the desired lives with the opposite sex behaviors, which they have been inheriting since their childhood.
- * The TGs are seen as the stigmatized in the society because of the lacking knowledge about TGs and homosexuality. Consequently, TGs are compelled to lead a miserable life in the society.
- * To some extent the open society at present, political change, institution like BDS, majority of Hindus are some of the reasons for TGs' attempts to come out nowadays.

- * To understand gender only biological sex is not adequate, so, along with it gender should be understood based on the mental feelings.
- * If the knowledge about TGs were included in the course study of schools/colleges, the TGs would get TG-friendly environment, which would allow them to have their study smoothly. The non-TGs would not dominate TGs and "We" feeling could be installed in the society.
- * It can be said that the TGs are boosted with their involvement in BDS. The TGs were repressed in the society before but nowadays they are aware about the domination and are able to protest against the injustice done upon them.
- * Nowadays, some of the TGs are able to live in their desired roles to some extent but many are still living lives with dual identity.

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