

A Study on Growing Up Thirdgendered and Social Perception

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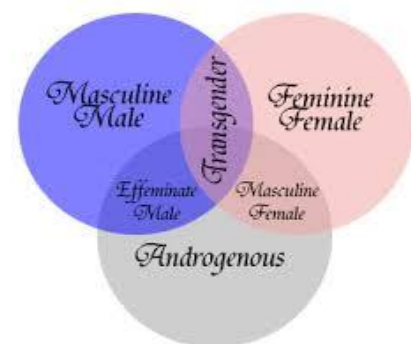
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ABSTRACT

Transgender people experience a mismatch between their gender identity or gender expression and their assigned sex. Transgender is also an umbrella term because, in addition to including trans men and trans women whose binary gender identity is the opposite of their assigned sex (and who are sometimes specifically termed transsexual if they desire medical assistance to transition), it may include gender queer people (whose identities are not exclusively masculine or feminine, but may, for example, be bigender, pangender, genderfluid, or gender). A transvestite is the practice of dressing and acting in a style or manner traditionally associated with the other sex. It is also called as transvestitism. The word has undergone several changes of meaning since it was first coined and is still used in a variety of senses. This research insights the transgender and their various achievements, scope and opportunities offered to them in the society.

INTRODUCTION: GROWING UP TRANSGENDER: RESEARCH AND THEORY

As transgender identities become increasingly visible, those who work with and those who love trans youth seek resources to understand what it means to grow up “trans.” With little to guide us, adults may fall back on outdated theories or confuse transgender and gay identities. According to some sources, the term transvestite today is considered outdated and derogatory. Cross dressers who dresses in clothes normally only associated with the opposite gender. A man who dresses in women’s clothes is a male to female (MTF) crossdresser, a woman who dresses as a man is a female to male (FTM) crossdresser. Transsexualis the term used by the clinical and medical communities specifically for people with cross-gender



identifications who seek out sex-reassignment surgery (SRS). This article offers an introduction to current research and theory behind transgender identity formation, and suggests a framework for understanding gender that moves beyond a rigid binary system. Part two of this series will focus on moving from risk to resilience with transgender youth. Transgender expression should not be confused with sexual orientation; a transgender person may be gay or straight. Among transgender boys, feminine traits typically emerge early in development. Research on transgender girls is less common because western society is more tolerant of tomboy “rough-and-tumble” girls. A recent study suggests that gender nonconforming girls have a range of gendered self-concepts, and develop identities to accommodate an authentic sense of self rather than transition within a limited binary gender system. Though attention has largely focused on sex reassignment surgery (SRS) to resolve sex-gender conflict, only a fraction of transgender individuals pursue SRS. There is ample research proved that transgender

identity development is exploring childhood cross-gender behaviors; however, explorations of cross-gender identities are less common. Recent developmental explorations of transgender identities suggest that trans people typically go through a process of dissonance, exploration, and disclosures that, when successful, leads to identity resolution. Feelings of difference may begin in early childhood; some individuals remember first feeling that something was “wrong” or out of sync between the body and mind as early as age three. Other children experience mind-body discord as late as age 12 or 13, prompted by unwanted physical changes during puberty. Sixty percent of trans youth experience violent assaults and 32% attempt suicide. Parental rejection leads to low self-esteem and negative self-image. Transgender youth are marginalized both in mainstream society and in lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) social groups, compounding their risk.

OBJECTIVES

- To know about transgender and analyze their emphasis and growth in various fields.
- To find out the scope of their achievements.
- To analyze the various development opportunities offered to them and their rights in the society.

SCOPE

A study has been done on a small scale by questionnaire method to find out the opinion of different people about transgender. And hence the responses thus recorded and its interpretation and conclusions derived cover only those set of respondents belonging to Chennai. Furthermore, an online research methodology was undertaken to collect facts and information about the study.

LIMITATIONS

- The concentration of the study is provided on a very small scale of population.
- The results and conclusion thus derived is completely based on our survey. The survey was carried in our

local premises (Chennai City) and is not applicable to other metropolitan cities in India.

- The reference sources like projects and presentations were very few as not many had made a study on transgender.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kara devaney, Gender does not exist on a binary system. Rather, gender exists on a continuum. The term transgender is “used to describe a broad range of people who experience and/or express their gender somewhat differently from what most people expect. **Bilodeau (2005)** gives a sample of terms that describe transgender identities: transsexuals (preoperative, postoperative), transvestites, drag queens, drag kings, male to female (MTF), female to male (FTM), cross dressers, and gender benders. Transgender is an umbrella term that encompasses all these gender variant identities. **Melchior, Huba, Schneir, Radzik, Belzer and Panter (1999)** compared the psychosocial characteristics, risk factors, and service needs of youth based on a combination of gender, orientation, and transgender status as well as HIV serostatus in 142 individuals enrolled in services at an HIV risk reduction clinic for adolescents and young adults. **Grossman and D'augelli (2007)** studied the risk factor of suicide among transgender youth. Nearly half of the sample reported having seriously thought about taking their lives and one quarter reported suicide attempts. Factors significantly related to having made a suicide attempt included suicidal ideation related to transgender identity; experiences of past parental verbal and physical abuse; and lower body esteem, especially weight satisfaction and thoughts of how others evaluate the youths' bodies.

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS IN TAMIL NADU

Transgender people are called as Thirunar, Thirunagai for transfeminine people and Thirunambi for transmasculine people. The term Aravaani in Tamil was widely popularized before 1990's which is a substitute term for Hijra in India and visible male to female transgender people i.e. Thirunagai are often discriminated against in jobs forcing them to resort to begging and prostitution. Thirunagai's (transfeminine) meet in Koovagam, a village in the Ulundurpettaluk in Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu in the Tamil month of Chitrai (April/May) for an annual festival which takes place for fifteen days. They also meet in Coimbatore singanallur Koothandavar temple and Madurai reserve line Maariyamman Temple festival where they offer Mullapaari(sacred millets and grains) to mother goddess. Tamil Nadu has an estimated population of more than 30,000 transgender people. It has made great strides in trying to integrate transgender people into society. This includes welfare schemes initiated by the Government and acceptance of transgender people into the mainstream media and film industry.

WELFARE SCHEMES

The Tamil Nadu state in India was the first state to introduce a transgender (hijra/ aravani) welfare policy. According to the transgender welfare policy transgender people can access free Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in the Government Hospital (only for transfeminine people). Free housing program, various citizenship documents, admission in government colleges with full scholarship for higher studies. Tamil Nadu was also the first state to form a Transgender Welfare Board with representatives from the transgender community. The government has also started issuing separate

food ration cards for transgender people. In additional effort to improve the education of transgender people, Tamil Nadu government also issued an order on May 2008 to create a third gender for admissions to government colleges. The Government has also decided to conduct a census on the transgender population in order to issue identity cards. Government ensure transgender people get there benefits akin reserved communities like SC/STs and is taking steps to see that they get enrolment in schools and jobs in government besides protection from sexual harassment. A telephone helpline called "Manasu" was set up by Tamil Nadu AIDS Initiative-Voluntary Health Services (TAI-VHS) for members of the transgender community, their families and the public. Sahodari Foundation is an organization working for the transgender rights. Founded in 2007, Sahodari Foundation is a well known organization in India for its creative and alternative advocacy methods.

TRANSGENDER PUBLIC RESTROOM

Transgender and gender nonconforming people often experience discrimination in their communities when accessing public accommodations including being refused service, being treated differently than their non-transgender peers, or being victims to harmful verbal and physical violence when simply trying to carry



out their daily activities. Transgender Law Center works to increase legal protections for transgender people and their families on the state, local and national level so that they are treated with dignity and respect and are able to access the same businesses and services that are available to the general public.

Vital Reason behind Transgender Public Restrooms –

Some toilets use a combined gender symbol to indicate a gender-neutral or transgender-Friendly bathroom. People who are uncomfortable in men's or women's rooms for many reasons; for example, people who are not women or men and or people who are gender nonconforming. Parents/caregivers whose children are a different gender from them. People with caregivers or personal attendants who are a different gender from them

ACHEIVEMENTS

Popular Tamil Transgender and Queer People

- ✓ Revathi - First Transgender to write about Transgender and Hijra's in Asia.
- ✓ KalkiSubramaniam - First Openly Transgender entrepreneur and Founder of SahodariFoundation.
- ✓ NarthakiNataraj - First Transwoman to receive SangeetNatakAkademi Award.
- ✓ K PrithikaYashini - First Transwoman Sub-Inspector of Tamil Nadu Police.
- ✓ Rose Venkatesan - First Transwoman TV host.
- ✓ Karpaga - First Transwoman actor.
- ✓ Living Smile Vidya - First Transgender Autobiographer.
- ✓ Transgender Swapna - First Transgender I.A.S aspirant.
- ✓ Transgender Gunavathi - First Transgender Nurse.
- ✓ Padmini Prakash - First Transgender News Reader.
- ✓ Pastor Bharathi- First Transgender Pastor.

TRANSGENDER COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

Hijras: Hijras are biological males who reject their 'masculine' identity in due course of time to identify either as women, or "not-men", or "in-between man and woman", or "neither man nor woman". Hijras can be considered as the western equivalent of transgender/transsexual persons but Hijras have a long tradition/culture and have strong social ties formalized through a ritual called "reet" (becoming a member of Hijra community). There are regional variations in the use of terms referred to Hijras, for example, Kinnars (Delhi) and Aravanis

Aravanis and 'Thirunangi': Hijras in Tamil Nadu identify as "Aravani". Tamil Nadu Aravanigal Welfare Board, a state government's initiative under the Department of Social Welfare defines Aravanis as biological males who self-identify themselves as a woman trapped in a male's body. Some Aravani activists want the public and media to use the term 'Thirunangi' to refer to Aravanis.

Kothi: A local language term used in South East Asia to refer to PAGMB (Person Assigned Gender Male at Birth), who identify with characteristics, roles and behaviors conventionally associated with the feminine. Kothis have also been defined as effeminate PAGMBs, who like to cross dress and see themselves as women and use the female pronoun to describe themselves.

Jogtas/ Jogappas: Jogtas or Jogappas are those persons who are dedicated to and serve as a servant of Goddess Renukha Devi (Yellamma) – whose temples are present in Maharashtra and Karnataka. 'Jogta' refers to male servant of that Goddess and 'Jogti' refers to female servant (who is also sometimes referred to as 'Devadasi'). One can become a 'Jogta' (or Jogti) if it is part of their family tradition or if one finds a 'Guru' (or 'Pujari') who accepts him/her as a 'Chela' or 'Shishya' (disciple). Sometimes, the term 'Jogti Hijras' is used to denote those male-to-female transgender persons who are devotees/servants of Goddess Renukha Devi and who are also in the Hijra communities.

Shiv-Shakthis: Shiv-Shakthis are considered as males who are possessed by or particularly close to a goddess and who have feminine gender expression. Usually, Shiv-Shakthis are inducted into the Shiv-Shakti community by senior gurus, who teach them the norms, customs, and rituals to be observed by them. In a ceremony, Shiv-Shakthis are married to a sword that represents male power or Shiva (deity). Shiv-Shaktis thus become the bride of the sword. Occasionally, Shiv-Shakthis cross-dress and use accessories and ornaments that are generally/socially meant for women. Most people in this community belong to lower socio-economic status and earn for their living as astrologers, soothsayers, and spiritual healers.

TRANSGENDER – MYTH

Hijras in India have a very rich religious-cultural historical background. In India they are treated as demi-gods. People believe that hijras have blessing and cursing power and hence give respect to them. People are also hijraphobic because of the belief that they might get cursed if they don't give money to hijras. In Tamil Nadu hijras are known as Aravani. The meaning of the term "Aravani" means a person who worships Lord Aravan. The story of Lord Aravan is mentioned in the great epic Mahabharata. There is not much difference between hijra and aravani people. The only visible difference that can be

observed is the cultural difference. Hijra group is a closed community and the main professions are begging, dancing and prostitution. Aravani people are also engaged in similar profession but they lead more individual and independent life. The other categories that do not identify themselves as hijra or aravani fall under the transgender umbrella. In the Mahabharata ("Great India" epic), the Pandavas ("Five Brothers") must sacrifice one of their fighters to win the goddess Kali's favor in an upcoming battle with their Kaurava cousins over who will rule their kingdom. No woman would be allowed to marry a doomed husband and become a widow only a day later, so the god Krishna turned into the beautiful enchantress Mohini, spending that final night with Aravan as Aravan's wife and lover. Explanations vary as to how the other requests were granted. One account says that he was sacrificed by having his flesh cut up (alternate: Aravan cut the flesh off his body himself), leaving his head and skeleton to miraculously witness the battle in its entirety, after which the living head was killed by a demon. Another account relates that his dismembered body came together and he was killed anew on the eighth day of the battle. A third version states that his sacrificed body came back together, his head was cut off on the eighth day, and his head watched the battle for the next ten days. Aravan is associated with the cobra, and his mother Ulupi was a naga (snake-being) princess. In some variations of the myth, Aravan was also a eunuch.

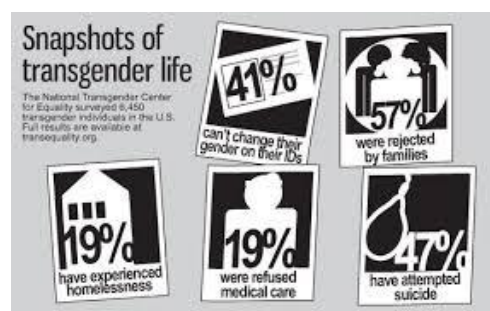
THE ARAVANI FESTIVAL

It is an eighteen-day event in southern India that commemorates the one-day marriage of Aravan, a hero selected for human sacrifice, and Mohini, a beautiful female incarnation of the god Krishna. It is also a festival that draws Aravanis (male-to-female transgender people devoted to Aravan, also known as alis and hijras (people born male or intersex who dress as women and may undergo ritual castration)). "Aravani," "Ali" and "hijra" are sometimes treated as synonyms, and sometimes as distinct identities. The largest Aravani festival is held every year in the town of Koovagam, near Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu, India in the month of Chithirai (April-May) at the Koothandavar Temple. Approximately twenty-five thousand Aravanis and hijras from Singapore, Malaysia, and all over India attend the festival. They collectively take on the role of Mohini, symbolically marrying Aravan and then going into a state of mourning and widowhood the next day. Aravan festivals in Tamil Nadu and those dedicated to Bahuchara Mata (hijras' patroness-goddess) in the Indian state of Gujarat are among the most important in the hijra yearly cycle of public devotion. The festival in Koovagam is also a site for LGBTQ activists to support the hijra community. Among the festivals dedicated to Aravan, the Koothandavar Festival in Koogavam (also known as the Ali Festival) is significant. Male brides have been marrying Aravan annually for at least one hundred years. The presence of large numbers of hijras and Alis at the festival is considered a more recent phenomenon, perhaps since the 1970s, but the issue is debatable since hijras and other male-to-female identities have been around much longer than that, and those scholars recording the history may have chosen to ignore the presence of males who did not conform to hetero normal standards. Much of the festival centers on a three-dimensional image of the head of Koothandavar (Aravan-as-deity) that is infused with Koothandavar's soul. The head is paraded in the streets and set atop a tall frame bedecked with flower garlands representing his body. Two days before the first full moon of Chithirai (fourteenth and fifteenth days of the festival), Aravanis and hijras arrive in Koogavam to sing and dance in

praise of their future husband. During the festival, they and a number of Straight-identified men will dress as brides, go to the Koothandavar Temple, and obtain a thali (mangalasutra or thread and token symbolizing their status as married women, to wear around their neck from the officiating priest who stands in the place of Aravan. One-night marriages with masculine-identified men known as panthis, who attend the festival in large numbers to have sex with the brides, are common that same evening, marking the festival as an erotic as well as spiritual celebration of love. On the sixteenth day and the first full moon, Aravan is symbolically sacrificed to Kali by removing the garlands from the frame supporting his head. The brides then become widows, break their thalis and wrist bangles, and weep openly for their dead spouse.

TRANSGENDER BEAUTY CONTEST

"This Miss Koovagam contest is one of the events that are organised on the occasion of the annual function we organise," said the top organising member of the Transgenders community here. Several members of the transgender community hailing from various parts of the country began descending at Arulmigu Koothandavar Temple at Koovagam near here for taking part in the cultural festival.



Cultural shows including skits on awareness of AIDS by the transgender were held earlier to mark the four-day festival that ends on Wednesday, a said.

"Earlier there was not enough support from the government for them. But after 2004 transgenders were getting the basic rights in order to meet the daily demand. They celebrate this festival every year during this month. One of the highlights is, that we can see the unity among them during the festival",

INEQUALITIES AND PROBLEMS FACED BY TRANSGENDERS IN INDIA

In India there are a host of socio – cultural groups of transgender people like hijras/ kinnars, and other transgender identities like – shiv-shaktis, jogtas, jogappas, Aradhis, Sakhi, etc. Transgender people in India face a variety of issues. So far, these communities perceive that they have been excluded from effectively participating in social and cultural life, economy and politics and decision-making processes. A primary reason of the exclusion is perceived to be the lack of recognition of the gender status of hijras and other transgender people. It is a key barrier that often prevents them in exercising their civil rights in their desired gender. So far, there is no single comprehensive source on the basis of which an evidence-based advocacy action plan can be prepared by transgender activists or possible legal solutions can be arrived at by policymakers. Reports of harassment, violence, denial of services, and unfair treatment against transgender persons in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodation have been discussed in local media, from time to time.

Transgender persons are deprived of the fundamental rights available to the other two sexes i.e. male and female, and are not considered as the third sex. They are deprived of many of

the rights and privileges which other persons enjoy as citizens of India. The transgender are deprived of social and cultural participation, are shunned by family and society, have only restricted access to education, health services and public spaces, restricted rights available to citizens such as right to marry, right to contest elections, right to vote, employment and livelihood opportunities and various human rights such as voting, obtaining Passport, driving license, ration card, Identity Card etc. The transgender community is treated as a legal non-entity in violation of Article 14, 15, 16 and 21 of the Constitution of India.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and ought to be entitled to enjoyment of human rights without discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Everyone is entitled to equality before the law and equal protection of the law without any such discrimination. Transgenders are also part of society and have equal, rights as are available to other persons. The discrimination based on their class and gender makes the transgender community one of the most disempowered and deprived groups in Indian society.

The main problems that are being faced by the transgender community are of discrimination, unemployment, lack of educational facilities, homelessness, lack of medical facilities like HIV care and hygiene, depression, hormone pill abuse, tobacco and alcohol abuse, penectomy and problems related to marriage and adoption.

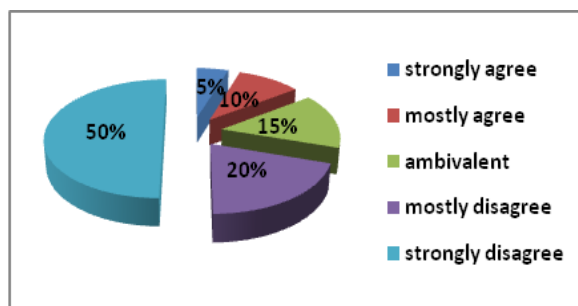
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Random sampling method is used in this study .The sample size of the present study is 10 for Public and 10 for Third gender. A set of printed questions with a choice of answers was devised for the purpose of the survey for the present study. In the questionnaire there were 8 questions for transgender and 8 questions for public and each question related to different factors of the study (Problems faced by transgender and views of public about transgender).

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

From Questionnaire to Transgender

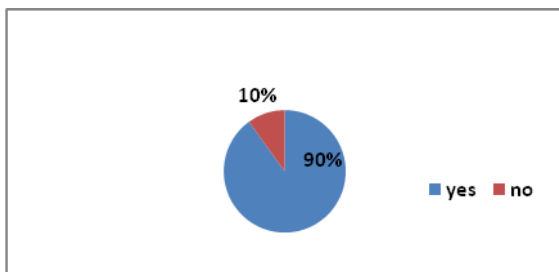
1. I think I could be permanently cured of transgendered behavior



Interpretation:

From the above analysis, a major of the transgender people believe that they can be cured. Moreover, from the analysis taken in the state of Tamil Nadu, the government has also supported them with various schemes for their growth and upliftment.

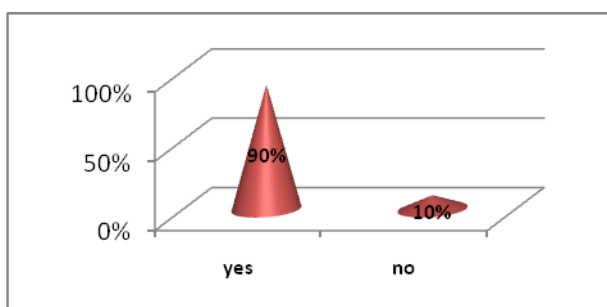
2. Do you view your transgendered behavior as a mental illness/disorder?



Interpretation:

The society at large often looks upon the transgender people for their outlook and behavior in the public. Many of the general public sees this third gender as a disorder or illness like any other illness. The responses collected from the transgender group also reveal the same, where a majority of them feel their behavior as a mental illness/disorder.

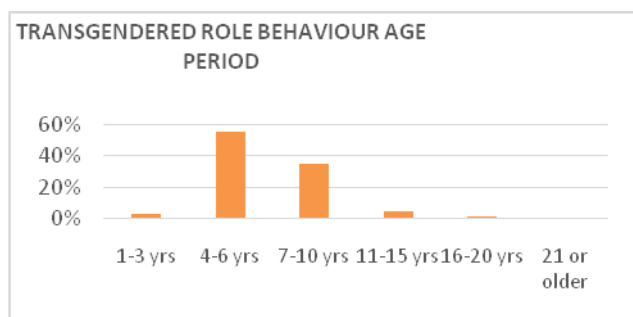
3. Currently, do/would you feel embarrassed or ashamed if a non-transgendered person sees you while you are dressed in opposite sex clothing?



Interpretation:

Transgender group of people have their clothing styles different where sometimes they choose their clothing to be the clothing of their opposite sex. This is very commonly looked as something unusual by the non-transgender group. Based on an analysis of the above fact, over 90 % of the transgender feel ashamed when or embarrassed when a non-transgendered person views them dressed in opposite sex clothing.

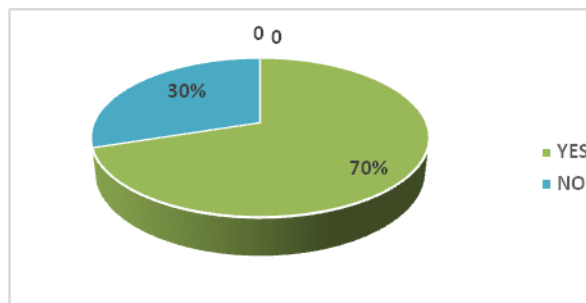
4. My earliest remembrance of transgendered role behavior was:



Interpretation:

When they were asked about their earliest remembrance of transgendered role behavior there were 55% of them who had the changes, between the age of four to six and 35% of them between the age of 7-10 and 5% between the age of 11-15 and 3% in the age of 1-3.

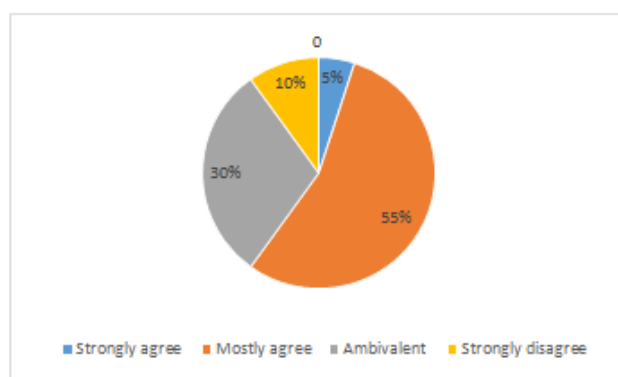
5. Have you had cosmetic surgery to alter appearance to that more characteristic of opposite genetic sex?



Interpretation:

70% of the respondents had yes an answer when they were asked whether they had tried doing cosmetic surgery to alter appearance to that more characteristic of opposite genetic sex and only 30% reminded having a no to it.

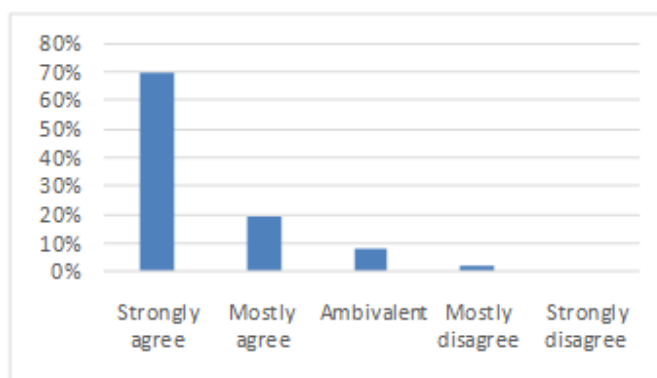
6. I am comfortable with having physical characteristics of my own genetic sex.



Interpretation:

Through this analysis we came to know that More than half were mostly agreeing of them being comfortable with having physical characteristics of my own genetic sex and 30% strongly agreed.

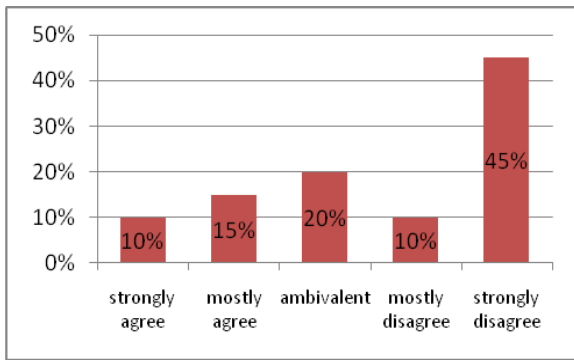
7. I have fantasized about having genitals of the opposite sex.



Interpretation:

According to the analysis 70% of them strongly agreed to the point of being fantasized about having genitals of the opposite sex. And it is analyzed that 2% of our respondents have disagreed too.

8. I think that my transgender behavior is solely the result of behavior conditioning during my childhood



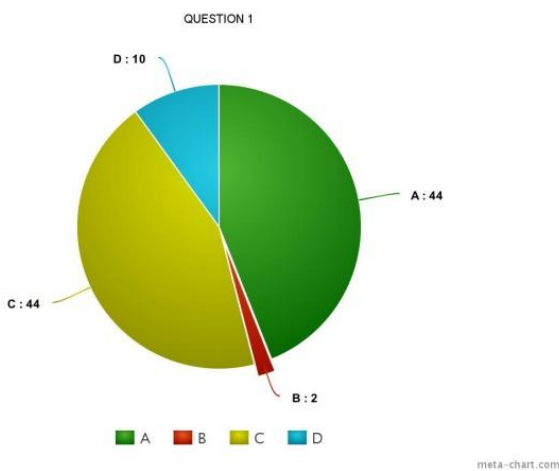
Interpretation:

On the basis of above analysis, 45% of the transgender strongly disagree that their transgender behavior is solely the result of behavior conditioning during their childhood, while 20% of the respondents were ambivalent to their decisions. Therefore, the childhood phase has played an important role conditioning their behavior

FROM QUESTIONNAIRE TO TRANSGENDER

1) How should the family members and friends of the transgender people be?

- a) Support them and treat them equally
- b) Ostracize them from the family
- c) Support them but not allow them to mingle public
- d) None of the above

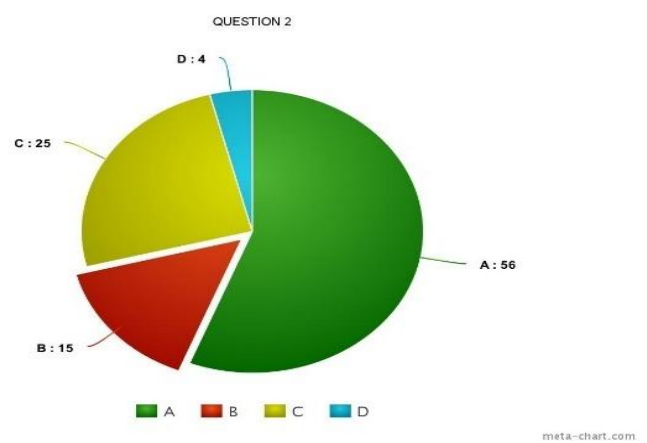


Interpretation:

To this question, the first and the third options got equal amount of votes. Ten percent of the participants had no opinion and only two percent felt that transgender community should be ostracized by the society. Hence, a majority of them feel that the transgender should be supported.

2) What is your stand on the basic rights available to the transgender community?

- a) They are completely deprived of all of their rights
- b) All of their rights are available to them easily
- c) Not all of the rights of a common man are available to them
- d) None of the above.

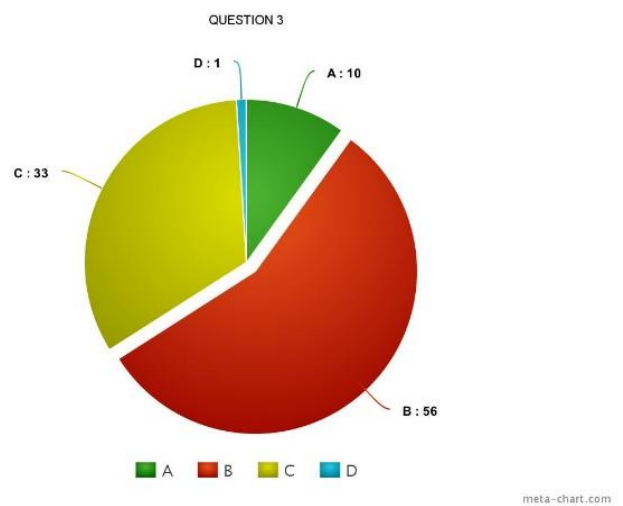


Interpretation:

A whopping majority of the participants of the survey feel that the transgender community is completely deprived of all of their rights. The second majority of the votes went for the statement "Not all of the rights available to a common man are available to them".

3) Do you think reservation should exist for the transgender community?

- a) No, special reservation should not exist.
- b) Yes, they are neglected often and require reservations.
- c) Reservations for them should exist but not in all sectors of the economy.
- d) None of the above



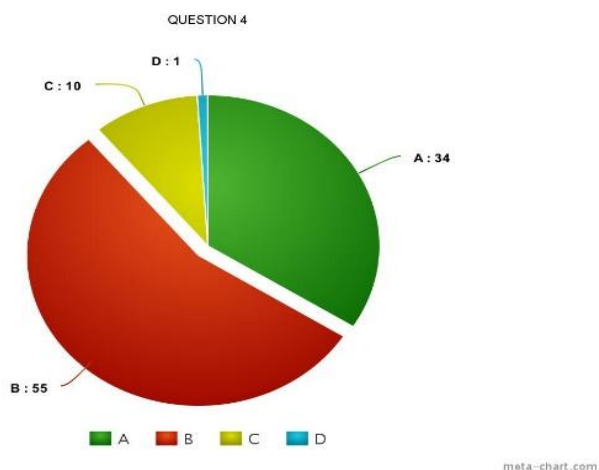
Interpretation:

Around fifty-six percent of the participants of the survey feel that reservations are required because of the general neglect. The second majority feel reservations should not exist in all sectors.

4) Do you think certain people of the transgender community misuse their gender identity?

- a) Yes, they use it to harangue the public because they are lazy.
- b) No, they ask for financial help only as a last resort.
- c) Yes, they misuse their status but only because we oblige to their needs.

- d) No, they are not misusing as they have the right to demand for money

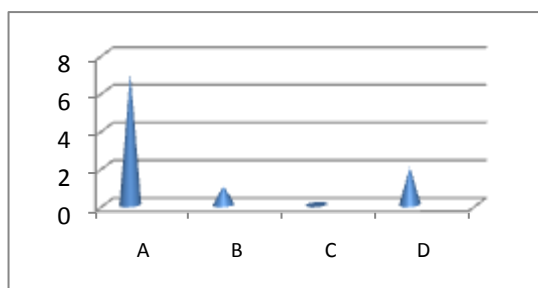


Interpretation:

The most popular opinion was that their gender identity is not being misused and rather, it's their right to demand for money. Around thirty-four percent of the participants feel that certain people from the transgender community are just lazy to seek employment and resort to harassment of the pedestrians for revenue.

5) Do you think the option "transgender" be available on various forms?

- a) Yes, there should be, in order to avoid confusion
- b) No, not necessary as they are only minority.
- c) No, not necessary because they should be allowed to choose only between male and female.
- d) No opinion



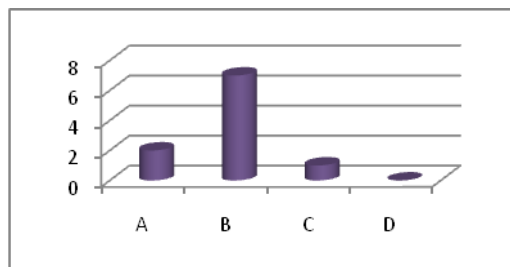
Interpretation:

With the policy implemented by the Supreme Court that Transgender should be recognized as the third gender along with analysis from the survey, we conclude that here should be an option or a category separately for transgender to avoid confusion and also to contribute in their growth and get them equal rights

6) How do you think transgender people should participate in sports?

- a) As the gender that they prefer to be identified by.
- b) There should be a separate category for the Trans community.

- c) They should not be allowed to participate.
- d) No opinion.

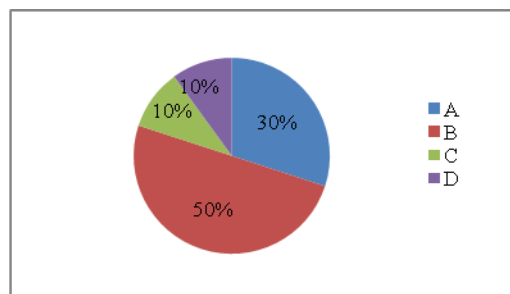


Interpretation:

The Tamil Nadu Government has been very supportive for the growth and development of the transgender group, providing them equal opportunities in various fields. Furthermore, from the above analysis it is analyzed that there should be a separate category for transgender in sports so that they could showcase their talents and also get equal opportunities like everyone else concluding that the non-transgender group also have their contribution towards the platform of providing equal opportunities.

7) How long do you think it'll take for the transgender community to not be looked down upon, in India?

- a) Within 5 years
- b) 5-15 years
- c) 15-20 years
- d) More than 20 years

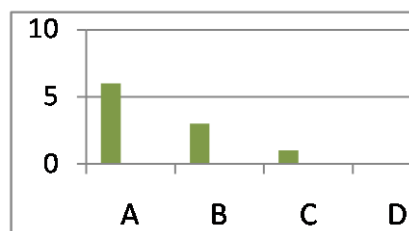


Interpretation:

Very often the transgender group has always been looked upon by the society mainly for the way they carry themselves in the society. From the above research it is analyzed that in India it would take 5 - 15 years for the transgender community to not be looked down. 50% of them have chosen this option.

8) What do you feel about LGBT rights in India?

- a) LGBT community has adequate rights available to them.
- b) It is a serious issue and should be given utmost importance.
- c) Their rights are important but there are bigger issues existing in India.
- d) They don't need any special rights



Interpretation:

The most popular opinion about LGBT rights was that they had adequate rights available to them in India and more rights are been raised to them. The survey shows that more than 50 % of them have chosen this option and 30% have chosen that utmost care and importance should be given to this.

FINDINGS

From the above research analysis, from the side of the transgender themselves, the first question we asked them was if they thought if they can be permanently cured of their transgender qualities. Only half of them were of the mind-set that they could not be permanently cured. It indicates that they think that what they are is curable, at least to a certain extent. Almost a majority of the transgender interviewed believe that their transgender behavior is solely due to the behavior conditioning in their childhood. When we dug deeper, we found that certain incidents or the way they were treated in their childhood led to them discover or adopt their transgender nature. A whopping ninety percent of them felt that being transgender was due to an illness or disorder of the mind. This is the extent to which society has pushed them; to be so embarrassed of who they are that they think it's a disease. Also, a high number of them revealed that they feel ashamed when a non-transgender person sees them in opposite sex clothing. Whilst talking about their childhood, we found the ages between 4 and 10 was the time they remember themselves behaving as the other gender does. This was either from a strong memory (as said before marked by an incident) or a recount of their actions by someone close to them at that age.

When their appearance and behavior does not match in the traditional binary sense, the transgender are mocked at laughed at, in some cases even harassed. Therefore a bulk of them have opted or are having thoughts to have cosmetic surgery done in order to alter their appearance which is more characteristic of the genetic sex they behave as. The majority of those opting for surgery are also those who have fantasized about having the genitals of the opposite sex. They feel that at least then they will be accepted and not ridiculed. As for the remaining who has not chosen surgery, it is largely due to the fact of lack of finance and the fear of going under the knife. Some are happy with the body they were born with but quite a lot of them are making themselves comfortable with themselves as they believe the surgery they require is out of their reach and will forever remain fantasies. We then approached the general public with a set of questions to determine where they stood on

the issues of the transgender. The general sentiment is that the families and friends should be supportive of the transgender. Though we do not know how many people would, in reality, be supportive, we had a few of them who blatantly called for the transgender to be ostracized. Even those who thought that they should be supportive felt that the transgender should not be allowed to mingle with the public. When the talk turned to the basic rights available to the transgender community, the perception was split two ways: the transgender were completely deprived of all their rights or not all rights available to a common man are available to them. Essentially, the view was that the transgender community was not receiving the rights that they should naturally be given. As the new millennia are coming into full force, it brings with it a change in the social culture. Though the transgender themselves feel avoided and refused certain opportunities for the sole reason that they are transgender, the society is slowly accepting them for who they are. This is evident where almost more than half the population interviewed agreed that reservations should exist for the transgender community and that they do not misuse this gender identity or ask for financial help simply because they are transgender.

CONCLUSION

The transgender community is a minority when we look at society. But it is not a reason for their issues to be overlooked. They too are living, breathing human beings. They should not be shunned just because they do not conform to the archaic social perceptions. Times are changing and we as the human race have evolved beyond the limits we ourselves set in the beginning. Particularly regarding the transgender issue, we are only just on the threshold of complete knowledge and understanding. A generation which spurned them and a generation which is willing to understand toe to toe. Discrimination and building up walls has never gone down well in history. The same should not be repeated when it comes to transgender. Being more aware of their plight and at the very least trying to understand their situation goes a long way. This research was undertaken to find out to what extent the public were accepting of transgender and to what extent the transgender they feel comfortable and accepted. It shows that people are becoming less judgmental and embracing that people are people no matter their gender. It also points out that this has not fully reached the transgender community and they are still chided by those few who are ill-educated towards the transgender. But there is hope and hope lights the way out of darkness.

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