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Lives in transition: Assessing transgender quality of life

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Abstract

This study evaluates the quality of life among transgender individuals by categorizing them into two age groups: younger individuals (18–25 years) and older individuals (26–50 years). The findings highlight critical challenges faced by transgender individuals, such as physical health barriers, psychological health struggles, social exclusion, and environmental challenges. A detailed analysis reveals that 13.3% of respondents rated their quality of life as good, 56.6% as average, and 30% as poor. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions in healthcare access, mental health support, social acceptance, and community safety to enhance the quality of life for transgender individuals.

Keywords: Transgender quality of life, healthcare disparities, mental health, social exclusion, environmental challenges

Introduction

Understanding the quality of life experienced by transgender individuals is pivotal in promoting their health, social inclusion, and overall well-being. Transgender individuals face numerous challenges, such as healthcare access barriers, familial rejection, and societal discrimination. Disclosing their gender identity often leads to familial rejection, adversely affecting their mental health. On the other hand, familial acceptance significantly improves their emotional well-being.

This study aims to evaluate the quality of life of transgender individuals in two age groups—18–25 years and 26–50 years—by studying their Historical Background, Contemporary QoL Status (focusing on physical health, psychological health, social relationships and environment), General Living Status (presenting general well-being and general perception) and Difficulties/Hurdles representing the quality of life. This research provides a foundation for developing targeted interventions to address disparities and foster an inclusive environment.

Methodology

The study involved 30 transgender respondents, divided into two age groups: 18–25 years and 26–50 years. A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants, and data were collected using a structured individual interview method was used to collect in-depth information of participants. After obtaining permission from WHO, their

QOL-BREF 100 was modified to use by the researcher and named as Quality of life of Transgender Scale(for present study) to assess the quality of life of transgender individuals, covering Physical health (having 14 positive and 3 negative statements, total 17 statements), Psychological health (comprising of 33 positive and 7 negative statements, total 40 statements), Social relationships (having 10 statements) and Environment (consisting of 14 statements). Quantitative measures assessed the levels of quality of life, categorized into good, average, and poor. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions to assess the overall quality of life levels.

Results and Discussion

Studying the quality of life experienced by transgender people is essential for multiple reasons. Transgender people frequently experience obstacles to receiving healthcare, which has a negative impact on not just their physical health but also on other dimensions of their life. To provide a comprehensive interpretation, the results have been analyzed and discussed, highlighting the performances of these two groups across major aspects ie., Historical Background, Contemporary QoL Status (focusing on physical health, psychological health, social relationships and environment), General Living Status (presenting general well-being and general perception) and Difficulties/Hurdles representing the quality of life.

Overall Quality of life of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on overall Quality of Life n=30

S. No.	Levels of quality of life	f (%)
1.	Good	4 (13.3)
2.	Average	17 (56.6)
3.	Poor	9 (30)

From the above Table 1, it can be understood that only 13.3 percent of respondents rated their quality of life as good. This indicates that a small proportion of transgender individuals in this study were in-content with their overall life circumstances. Majority the of respondents (56.6%) rated their quality of life as average. This suggests that while these individuals may not be experiencing significant difficulties, they also are not thriving and their quality of life was moderate. A significant portion (30%) rated their quality of life as poor. This highlights the considerable challenges and barriers faced by a notable fraction of the transgender population in this study.

The results reflect a pattern of moderate to significant challenges in the overall quality of life for transgender individuals. This aligns with findings from broader research, which consistently documents that transgender individuals often face adversities on many grounds affecting their well-being.

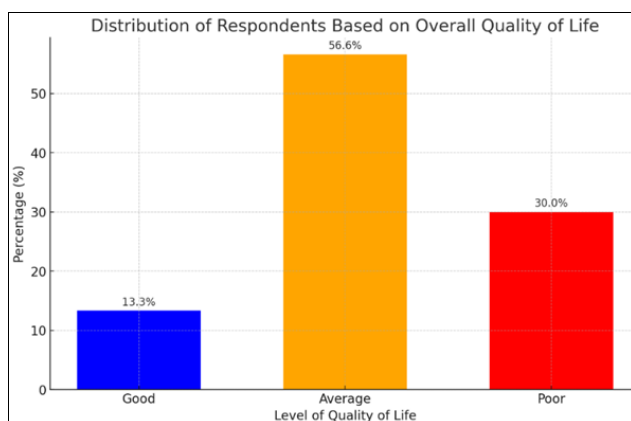


Fig 1: Distribution of Quality of life of respondents

Above Figure 1 represents distribution of the respondents based on their overall quality of life. This visual representation provides a clear overview of the Quality of Life levels among the study participants.

Transgender individuals frequently encounter barriers to healthcare access and experience higher rates of health disparities. (James *et al.*, 2016) [3] in the U.S. Transgender Survey found that 33 percent of respondents had a negative experience with a healthcare provider related to being transgender. Additionally, many avoid seeking medical care due to fear of discrimination, contributing to poorer physical health outcomes. According to a study by the National Center for Transgender Equality (2015) [4], 40 percent of transgender adults have attempted suicide, a rate nearly nine times higher than the general population. This good prevalence of mental health issues indicates significant psychological health challenges. Social support is a critical determinant of well-being, yet transgender individuals often

face rejection from family and friends. A study done by Bockting *et al.* (2013) [1] emphasized the protective role of social support against mental health issues. However, social exclusion remains a significant barrier, affecting the overall quality of life. The living environment, including safety and community acceptance, also impacts quality of life. Transgender individuals frequently encounter discrimination and violence, contributing to a hostile living environment. Grant *et al.* (2011) [2] reported that 63 percent of transgender people experienced serious acts of discrimination, such as loss of employment or housing, underscoring the pervasive challenges in their environment.

The overall quality of life among transgender individuals in this study is predominantly average, with a significant portion experiencing poor quality of life. These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the health disparities, psychological distress, social exclusion and environmental challenges faced by transgender individuals. Improved healthcare access, mental health support, social acceptance and protective legal measures are few pinpoints which require serious attention to enhance the overall quality of life for transgender communities.

The results reflect a pattern of moderate to significant challenges in the overall quality of life for transgender individuals. This aligns with findings from broader research, which consistently documents that transgender individuals often face adversities on many grounds affecting their well-being.

Key Challenges Identified

Healthcare Access

Transgender individuals frequently encounter barriers to healthcare, with 33% of respondents in a U.S. Transgender Survey reporting negative experiences with healthcare providers due to their gender identity (James *et al.*, 2016). [3] These barriers lead to poorer physical health outcomes and avoidance of necessary medical care.

Mental Health

Mental health challenges are prevalent among transgender individuals. The National Center for Transgender Equality (2015) [4] reported that 40% of transgender adults have attempted suicide, highlighting severe psychological distress. Rejection by family and society exacerbates these issues. However, social support can serve as a protective factor against mental health problems (Bockting *et al.*, 2013) [1].

Social Exclusion

Social rejection and exclusion remain pervasive issues. According to Grant *et al.* (2011) [2], 63% of transgender individuals experienced severe discrimination, including job loss and housing insecurity, contributing to a hostile living environment.

Environmental Factors

The living environment, including safety and acceptance within the community, significantly affects quality of life. Violence and discrimination are common, creating an unsafe and unsupportive environment for transgender individuals.

Conclusion

This study highlights the predominantly average quality of life among transgender individuals, with a significant proportion reporting poor conditions. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the healthcare disparities, psychological distress, social exclusion, and environmental challenges faced by transgender individuals.

Improving healthcare access, providing mental health support, fostering family and societal acceptance, and ensuring protective legal measures are critical steps toward enhancing the quality of life for transgender populations. A collaborative effort is essential to create an equitable and inclusive society where transgender individuals can thrive. The findings of the study will provide useful insights into the quality of life and life satisfaction of transgender in the current scenario, with respect to inside standing, it can also profoundly help policy makers and organizations to get acquainted with the needs of this group.

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