

RESILIENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG TRANSGENDERS

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

To quantify the relationship between resilience and mental health of young transgenders (Hijras).

STUDY DESIGN

Cross-sectional research design.

PLACE AND DURATION OF STUDY

The research was conducted on young transgenders of three cities of South Punjab (Bahawalpur; Multan & Rahim Yar Khan) between the months of February to May, 2018.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

The study comprised of 107 young transgenders (18-25 years) selected utilizing purposive sampling technique. Resilience was measured through Child and Youth Resilience Measure and mental health was measured through Mental Health Inventory.

RESULTS

The result of this research exhibits that resilience was significantly positively correlated with mental health of transgenders. Whereas, the results of independent sample t-Test exhibit that mean scores of resilience, mental health and psychological well-being were significantly higher among educated transgenders than uneducated cohorts. The mean score of psychological distress was significantly higher among uneducated transgenders as compared with educated transgender group.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that resilience remains positively associated with mental health of young transgenders. Educated young transgenders have more resilience and mental health as compared to uneducated young transgenders.

KEY WORDS

Psychological well-being, Psychological distress, Hijra, Eunuch.

INTRODUCTION

Eunuchs or 'Hijras' known to be male to female transgender are dwelling in Pakistani communities from the centuries.¹ Transgenders are more vulnerable in developing mental health problems as compared with other marginalized populations.^{2,3} The individuals identified as transgenders perform in the ways that are align with their resilience as being female, male or containing unknown sexual orientation.⁴

Social construction and social expectations are contrary for such people; biological sex and gender identity are inconsistent in action.⁵ Culture did not accept middle-sexes.⁶ Resultantly, young transgenders develop their membership with disadvantaged and impoverished groups that make them vulnerable to develop mental health issues.⁷ However, some transgender youth have psychological resilience that enables them to adapt positively when they encounter adverse experiences.

Psychological perspective depicts resilience as the capacity to bounce back adversity while facing difficult situations.^{8,9} The central process to develop resilience is dependent on coping skills and responses that lead towards positive mental health among marginalized populations.^{10,11} A body of researchers is convinced to assess resilience among transgenders by identifying stress inducing factors.^{2,12}

The rationale of this research encompasses to address the penurious population like transgenders to dig out their current plight regarding resilience and mental health. Further, demographic variation (education) is also cordoned off. This study hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between resilience and mental health of transgender youth and resilience and mental health would be higher among educated transgender youth as compared with uneducated transgender youth.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Participants

The study was comprised of 107 young transgenders (educated = 41 and uneducated = 66) by using purposive sampling technique from three big cities (Bahawalpur = 40, Multan = 31 and Rahim Yar Khan = 36) of South Punjab.

Instruments

*Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-28)*¹³

Resilience was measured through Urdu translated Child and Youth Resilience Measure-28.14 It is 5-point Likert rating scale (1 = Not at all and 5 = A lot). This scale is highly reliable for Pakistani marginalized youth ($\alpha = .92$).¹⁴

*Mental Health Inventory (MHI)*¹⁵

Urdu Translated MHI-38 and original scale by Veit and Ware (1983).¹⁶ MHI consisted of two subscales: 22 items Psychological Distress and 16 items Psychological Wellbeing.

This scale is rated on 6-point Likert ranging from 1 = all of the time to 6 = none of the time. Negative scoring was performed for the subscale of Psychological Distress, so greater scores on total MHI exhibits better mental health. This scale showed good reliability ranging from .83 to .96.¹⁷

Procedure

Permission was taken from the authors to use the instruments in this research. Further, formal permission was also taken from ethical review committee. Consent was sought from the participant after explaining the nature and purpose of the study. Before administering the questionnaire, rapport was developed with the participants. They were assured that all the information would be kept confidential. First of all, demographic information sheet was given to the participants in order to get information regarding their age, education, and residence. They were acknowledged for their participation and cooperation in the study.

RESULTS

The study comprised of 107 young transgenders (Mage = 21.14+2.39), in education, 41(38.3%) were educated and 66(61.7%) were uneducated. Whereas, 40(37.3%) were from Bahawalpur, 31(29.0%) were from Multan and 36(33.7%) were from Rahim Yar Khan. The results showed significant positive (but weak) correlation ($r = .39, p < .01$) between resilience and mental health. Further, results revealed that significant positive (but moderate) correlation was found ($r = .61, p < .01$) between resilience and psychological well-being. Moreover, results indicate significant negative (moderate) correlation ($r = -.52, p < .01$) between resilience and psychological distress. Similarly, significant positive (strong) correlation ($r = .77, p < .01$) was revealed between mental health and psychological well-being of transgenders. In the same vein, significant negative (but weak) correlation ($r = -.36, p < .01$) found between mental health and psychological distress. Finally, significant negative (moderate) correlation ($r = -.62, p < .01$) was seen between psychological distress and psychological well-being.

Table 1
Inter-Correlation between Resilience and Mental Health (N=107)

	Variables	M	SD	α	2	3	4
1.	Resilience	103.21	24.55	.89	.39**	-.52**	.61**
2.	Mental Health	138.97	21.47	.84	-	-.36**	.77**
3.	Psychological Distress	78.26	16.55	.73		-	-.62**
4.	Psychological Well-being	63.64	17.16	.88			-

** $p < .01$

Table 2
Differences between Transgender Youth in Resilience and Mental Health as per education

Variable	Educated (n= 41)		Uneducated (n= 66)		t	95%CI	
	M	SD	M	SD		LL	UL
Resilience	111.88	19.30	97.83	26.02	2.98**	4.71	23.38
Mental Health	148.34	21.42	133.15	19.48	3.77**	7.21	23.17
Psychological Distress	71.88	17.99	82.23	14.35	-3.29**	16.59	-4.11
Psychological Well-being	71.12	18.08	58.98	14.89	3.77**	5.76	18.52

** $p < .01$, CI for confidence interval, LL for lower limit and UL for upper limit, N = 107

To measure the normality of data, Skewness test was used that indicated the accepted range of normality for all variables (Resilience = .37, Mental Health = .81, Psychological Distress = -.49 & Psychological Well-being = 1.09). Some statisticians (George & Mallery, 2010; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2010) narrated that if values of skewness are between +2 / -2, it can be accepted as normal distribution^{18,19}. The results of independent sample t-test showed significant ($p < .01$) differences between educated and uneducated young transgenders in resilience and mental health. While, the mean score of resilience was significantly higher ($t = 2.98, p < .01$) among educated young transgenders ($M = 111.88, SD = 19.30$) as compared with uneducated young transgenders ($M = 97.83, SD = 26.02$). Further, the mean score of mental health was significantly higher ($t = 3.77, p < .01$) among educated young transgenders ($M = 148.34, SD = 21.42$) as compared to uneducated young transgenders ($M = 133.15, SD = 19.48$). Furthermore, the mean score of psychological distress was significantly higher ($t = -3.29, p < .01$) among uneducated young transgenders ($M = 82.23, SD = 14.35$) as compared with educated young transgenders ($M = 71.88, SD = 17.99$). The mean score of psychological well-being was significantly higher ($t = 3.77, p < .01$) among educated young transgenders ($M = 71.12, SD = 18.08$) than uneducated young transgenders ($M = 58.98, SD = 14.89$).

DISCUSSION

Transgenders face a number of stressors as compared with other sexual minorities.¹² It is not surprising that nature of these stressors is internalized rather external ones, so in the light of these findings, the current study gets more importance to deliberate the psychopathological issues in Eunuchs.²⁰ It conceptualizes health (including mental health) as a lifelong dynamic process, situating risk and protective factors within larger socio cultural structures and particular historical eras, continually interacting with social positions, including gender and sexual identity, to produce long-term, cumulative effects on mental health outcomes.²¹ The results of this research showed that resilience was significantly positively correlated with mental health and psychological well-being. Further, resilience was significantly negatively correlated with psychological distress of young transgenders. The results of this research are similar with past studies that found significant relationship between resilience and mental health young of transgenders.²² Furthermore, a recent study also found negative correlation between resilience and anxiety among transgender population.²³ A past studies examined resilience among transgender people was associated with fewer depressive symptoms.^{24,25} The results of above cited researches support the findings of this research.

A plethora of research indicates that mental health differences among Eunuchs have been understood under the umbrella of stress theory, that creates negative impacts of internal and external indicators of prejudice, stigma, and discrimination.¹² A study of transgender veterans (identified by ICD-9-CM codes) accessing health care services from the Veterans Administration (VA) found they had significantly higher rates of depression than their non-transgender counterparts.²⁶ The results of this study found that education played a significant role in differences in resilience and mental health. While, the mean score of resilience, mental health and psychological well-being were higher among educated transgenders than uneducated transgenders. Whereas, the mean score of psychological distress was higher uneducated transgenders

as compared with educated transgenders. The results of this research is in line with previous study.² Educated transgender population are more aware about their rights, so they have more resilience and psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, resilience among young transgenders is directly contacted with mental health and inversely linked with psychological distress. While, educated young transgenders have more resilience, mental health and psychological well-being than uneducated young transgenders. Whereas, uneducated young transgenders have greater psychological distress than educated young transgenders.

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