

## Comparison between Transgendered Individuals (Hijras) and Cisgendered Individuals to Understand the relationship between Resilience and Subjective Well Being

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Gender, as a term includes the cisgendered individuals and the transgendered individuals too. The word accepts the existence of the transgender population, but the social world doesn't. This socially disadvantaged population of the world has to face discrimination, stereotype and prejudice. Transgenders are often made to leave their homes; they are not accepted by society because they fail to play the expected gender role in the social sphere. This study aims at studying the relationship between resilience and subjective wellbeing transgendered individuals and cisgendered individuals.

**Methodology:** In the present study, 100 individuals between the age range of 20 to 40 years of age will be administered with Questionnaire on resilience and on subjective wellbeing and unstructured interview method.

**Results:** The study validates that there is a high correlation between resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individuals than cisgendered individuals.

**Conclusions:** The same study needs to be repeated in diverse populations to elucidate and validate the findings of the study.

**Keywords:** Transgenders, cisgenders, resilience, subjective well-being, gender.

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### INTRODUCTION

*"My barn having burned down; I can now see the moon."*

Äi Mizuta Masahide

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress - such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors [1]. It means bouncing back from difficult experiences. Resilience works as a coping mechanism at times to keep going ahead in life by thriving hard through all the obstacles and keep walking with grace, this leads to the feeling of subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as 'a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life' [2] Subjective well-being in simple words is how one feels about oneself. An individual who has satisfaction in his life and has a positive outlook towards his life experiences could be the one who has a sense of high subjective well-being, this could be influenced by one's gender. Gender, as a term includes the cisgendered individuals and the transgendered individuals too. The word accepts the existence of the transgender population, but the social world doesn't.

Transgenders are the one who go through a transition in their gender in their life. At times, a man-to-woman or a woman-to-man. There is always a fight between the mind and the body because the body does not accept the gender that the mind wants. There are some people whose gender identity is different from what

was initially expected when they are born. Most of these people describe themselves as Transgender. Transgender is an umbrella term that encompasses a diversity of gender expression including drag queens and kings, bi-genders, cross genders, transgenderises and transsexuals. Transvestites are people who like to dress like members of the opposite sex. Transsexuals are people who feel that their anatomical sex does not match the gender with which they identify. Bi gender refers to people who define themselves as having the behavioural, cultural and psychological characteristics associated with the male and female genders. Transgender is described as someone who is gender variant or transgresses gender norms as part of their lifestyle or identity [3].

This socially disadvantaged population of the world has to face discrimination, stereotype and prejudice. Transgenders are often made to leave their homes; they are not accepted by society because they fail to play the expected gender role in the social sphere. Right from the moment they become aware of them not conforming themselves to the gender norms they are expected to fulfil as that is expected of them, their struggle of striking a balance in this duality begins [4]. The society wants them to conform to the gender norms assigned to the sex they are of, however, the hard push from within to not conform to the sex they possess keeps on being a huge dilemma. The struggle is immense not just because of societal pressure but also from their own process of unfolding their gender identities to themselves. They are ready to work and get literate too, but the society does not accept them, which is why they resort to begging, prostitution and crime. In rare cases, Transgender procure children. In this case it becomes difficult for the children to survive as they have to live their entire life being labelled as a child of a 'kinnar' or 'hijra' [5].

Cisgendered can be defined as relating to or being a person, whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth [6]. In the research conducted there also have been studies conducted on studying the benefits of the social support among transgenders.

Research has generally shown the benefits of social support, such as the buffering effects on life stressors, yet there has been little empirical investigation of different types of support resources for transgender individuals. A study examined family support, support from friends, and connectedness to a transgender community and how these forms of support come together to influence mental health and resilience [7]. The cisgendered individuals, just like the transgendered individuals experience discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice, may be in different contexts and magnitudes. The pressure of abiding by gender norms and constantly keeping up with it is an equally exhausting process. However, it is quite subtle yet evident in their case [8]. The Transgendered individuals who possess resilience as a personality trait, probably can cope with their social issues well. Resilience gives them that ability to face the adversities which they come across after the transformation in their sexual orientation [9]. In case of cisgendered individuals, resilience could be a coping mechanism too for helping them cope with their hassles on an everyday basis as well as the major life distresses, they would be dealing with. The role of subjective well-being plays a key role in exploring how an individual goes about his or her life with respect to gender and irrespective of gender.

There have been a few studies conducted on resilience and subjective wellbeing among transgenders and cisgendered individuals [10]. Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress- such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means 'bouncing back' from difficult experiences [1]. Research shows that the Transgender individuals who possess resilience as a personality trait can cope with their social issues well. Resilience gives them that ability to face the adversities which they came across after transformation in their sexual orientation [9]. In a study conducted on the mental health experiences of transgender youth assessed the association between the minority stress, mental health and potential ameliorating factors in a large, recruited through the Internet, male-to-female and female-to-male transgender persons, stratified by gender. It was observed that social stigma was positively associated with psychological distress [11]. Another study on resilience in various populations has shown that, starting early in childhood, individuals often demonstrate resilience in the face of stress and adversity. Against experience of minority stress LGBT people mount coping responses and most survive and even thrive despite stress. But research on resilience in LGBT populations has lagged [12]. The few research studies that have focused on transgender individuals have made little or no reference to transgender people of colour. This study examined the resiliency factors like adverse Conditions, coping Mechanisms, Support, Community Resources, Perceptions of the LGBT Community, Intimate Relationships, Mental Health Counselling, the

transition Process, Family Reactions to Gender Identity and Family Systems/Beliefs. The results in this study argue that the transgender community is more than a group who face hardships, but rather they are a community who show tremendous strength and resiliency in living their day to day lives [13].

The term Subjective wellbeing is defined as an individual's experience of the affective reactions and cognitive judgments. A study states that, in the case of Transgender, there can be a high level of subjective wellbeing if they have accepted themselves as the way they are. On the other hand, it can even be low, if they find it a curse to be a transgender. It depends upon various things like their understanding of the self, family acceptance [2]. In a comparative study conducted it to compare the subjective well-being of transgender men with heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual cisgender men. The study attempted to understand the role of hormone therapy and surgical gender correction (sex reassignment surgery) as potential predictors of the subjective well-being of transgender men. The results revealed that the cisgender heterosexual men showed significantly higher subjective well-being in relation to members of the LGBTQ community (transgender men, homosexual and bisexual cisgender men). Sexual orientation of transgender men did not differentiate their subjective well-being [14]. In another study, the relationship between subjective well-being and resilience among cisgendered individuals was tested. The study claims to have obtained a positive correlation among resilience and subjective well-being [15].

Through the read literature, it was observed that there has been no considerable research work conducted in exploring the comparison between transgendered individuals and cisgendered individuals to understand the relationship between resilience and subjective wellbeing. The present research was an attempt to do so. The study aimed to explore the relationship between the resilience and subjective wellbeing among the transgendered individuals and the cisgendered individuals and determine the nature and type of relationship between resilience and subjective wellbeing among the transgendered individuals and the cisgendered individuals.

## METHODOLOGY

### Variables

#### Predictor variable

Subjective well-being: 'A person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life'

#### Outcome Variable

Resilience: Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress - such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors.

#### Moderator Variable

Gender (Transgendered Individuals and Cisgendered Individuals)

### Hypothesis:

There is no difference between the resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individual and resilience and subjective well-being among cisgendered individuals.

### Alternative Hypothesis

There is a high correlation between resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individuals and there is a low correlation between resilience and subjective well-being among cisgendered individuals.

### Controls:

Must have been born and brought up in Mumbai and are currently living in Mumbai. They were randomly selected individuals in the age group of 20 - 40 years of age.

### Sample:

- 50 Transgender (Hijaras) within the age group of 20-40 years of age range.
- 50 Cisgendered individuals within the age group of 20- 40 years of age range.

**Tools Used –**

- **The Resilience Scale:** The scale rated on a 7- point Likert Scale, being 1, “Totally disagree” 2. “I disagree a lot”, 3.” Disagree”, 4. “I do not agree nor disagree”, 5. “I agree a lot “and 7. “Totally agree”. The total score ranges between 25 and 175 points. Scores exceeding 161 indicate a very high degree of resilience, among 146-160 a high resilience degree between 131-145 a moderate degree of resilience, between 116-130 a low degree of resilience and scores below 100 indicate a very low degree of resilience capacity. The authors of the scale applied it in a sample consisting of 810 middle-aged adults. Results obtained from a principal component analysis indicated the existence of two main factors, referred to as I-Personal Competence and Factor II- Acceptance of themselves and of life. These factors explained 44% of the total variance [16].
- **Scales of Psychological Well Being:** he Scales of Psychological Well Being inventory is 18 items and consist of a series of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well-being by Dr. Aaron Jarden: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. Respondents rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6 with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement [17].
- **Unstructured Interview:** Additional information will be collected using unstructured interview; however, the obtained information will not be used for statistical analysis.

**Procedure**

A correlational study of 100 individuals was conducted by evaluating their resilience and subjective well-being transgendered individuals and cisgendered individuals. The tools were converted to google forms and the data was collected using Google forms, administering the questionnaire to the sample and conducting an unstructured interview. The participants were provided with a brief idea about the study being conducted and were assured about the confidentiality of their data. After the responses were obtained, they were scored in Microsoft Excel according to the scoring norms provided in the manual used tests of resilience and subjective well-being. After the scoring, the obtained data was correlated in Microsoft Excel using Pearson r. The obtained correlations were checked on the basis of the value of significance and accordingly the further conclusions were drawn.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A correlational study of 100 individuals was conducted by evaluating their resilience and subjective well-being transgendered individuals and cisgendered individuals within the age group of 20 to 40 years of the age range. There were 50 transgendered individuals and 50 cisgendered individuals. There were 21 cisgenderers and 19 transgenders in the age group of 20 - 25 years of the age range. There were 14 cisgenderers and 7 transgenders in the age group of 26 - 30 years of the age range. There were 7 cisgenderers and 9 transgenders in the age group of 31 - 35 years of the age range. There were 8 cisgenderers and 15 transgenders in the age group of 36 - 40 years of the age range (Table 1).

**Table 1: Demographic data of No. of participants in the age group**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>20- 25 Years</b>	<b>26- 30 Years</b>	<b>31- 35 Years</b>	<b>36 - 40 Years</b>
<b>Cisgender</b>	21	14	7	8
<b>Transgender</b>	19	7	9	15

Descriptive statistics were used to simply understand the description of the data. The total and mean for subjective well-being among cisgendered individuals were 4479 and 89.58 respectively. The total and mean for resilience among cisgendered individuals were 7751 and 155.02 respectively. The total and mean for subjective well-being among transgendered individuals were 4146 and 82.92 respectively. The total and mean for resilience among transgendered individuals were 5587 and 111.74 respectively. Table no. 2 is a

Summary of descriptive analysis of transgendered individuals and cisgendered individuals between the age range of 20-40 years of age.

**Table 2: Summary of descriptive analysis of Resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individuals and cisgendered individuals between the age range of 20-40 years of age**

Descriptive statistics	Descriptive analysis of cisgendered individuals		Descriptive analysis of transgendered individuals	
	Subjective well-being (X)	Resilience (Y)	Subjective well-being (X)	Resilience (Y)
Mean	89.58	155.02	82.92	82.92
Median	89.5	156	81	81
Mode	105	157	138	138
SD	10.18219735	9.556470188	33.22	39.30
Range	105	170	138	175
Total	4479	7751	4146	5587

The present study was undertaken to determine the nature and type of relationship between resilience and subjective wellbeing among the transgendered individuals and the cisgendered individuals. Pearson product moment correlation was calculated to understand the type and intensity of the correlation. Correlation is defined as the degree of relationship between two variables or factors. Correlation Coefficient index refers to the number which expresses the direction and the intensity of the relation between those two factors. The 3 types of correlation are positive, negative or zero. The intensity is low, moderate and high relationship. The obtained value of correlation for resilience and subjective well-being among cisgendered individuals is R is 0.0502. Although technically a positive correlation, the relationship between the variables is weak. The P-Value is .729187. The result is not significant at  $p < .05$ .

The obtained value of correlation for resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individuals is R is 0.993. This is a strong positive correlation, which means that high X variable scores go with high Y variable scores. The P-Value is  $< .00001$ . The result is significant at  $p < .05$ .

The obtained r value was 0.0502 for the correlation between resilience and subjective well-being among cisgendered individuals and the r value for the correlation between resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individuals is 0.993 and after referring to Critical Value at r, of correlation for resilience and subjective well-being among cisgendered individuals was found to be not significant. Value at r, of correlation for resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individuals was found to be significant. So, the alternative hypothesis is retained, and the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the Obtained data was more due to true correlation and less due to chance.

**Table 3: Summary of correlation between resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individuals and cisgendered individuals.**

Gender	R value	p value	N	DF	p<
Cisgender	0.0502	0.729187	50	48	ns
Transgender	0.993	0.00001	50	48	Significant at 0.05 level

**Qualitative Analysis**

Along with the Quantitative Analysis with high positive correlation, data analysis of the unstructured interview method also establishes a relationship between Subjective well-being and Resilience. The tools were converted to google forms and the data was collected using Google forms, administering the questionnaire to the cisgendered individuals. The data for the transgenders was collected by visiting Kinnar Asmita Garima Greh, which is a shelter home for the transgenders. Both the tools were administered on the participants and an unstructured interview was conducted. Their responses were recorded and interpreted. The following is an excerpt from the unstructured interview conducted:

**1. What do you think of yourself?**

The responses stated that the participants thought of themselves to be high on self-esteem and felt powerful. P32 stated, “ We all are complete within ourselves and grateful for the way we are.” This reflects them having high subjective well-being and a sense of self.

**2. What do you feel about yourself?**

The participants responded of feeling lucky to be born as a transgender. P24 said, “what we can do, no cisgendered individual can do, we are special and the descendants of Ardhanari Nateshwar (Avatar of Lord Shiva)”

**3. Do you think your life has an aim?**

The participants responded of their lives being extremely meaningful with a lot of goals of trying to attain respectable positions in the society. P3, “I wish to do a lot of social work for the upliftment of the Hijra community.” P16, “I intend to buy my own car and make my family proud of me and accept me. These responses and many more explained their urge and zest towards life.

**4. What did you think of yourself the moment you figured out that you are a transgender?**

All the participants replied to this question in more or less the same way. They stated that they always felt that they always felt different even as a child. They started being accustomed to the derogatory remarks received from the people around them. They were having an internal struggle of identifying their own identity. Right from considering themselves to be gays initially till identifying themselves as transgender was journey with lot of struggles. Facing the family, coming out of the closet, finding their community, finding a shelter to live and operations were the major struggles every transgender experienced.

**5. Can you differentiate your childhood life from your recent one? Could you tell me the difference?**

P7, “We had a home of our own with our people staying with us in our childhood, today we have our home too but we do not have our family with us.” The participants collectively responded that for them their community(hijra) is their home now and they feel the most understood in their community.

**6. Could you kindly share experiences from your life where you showed resilience?**

Transgendered(hijra) resort to begging and prostitution for making their life ends meet. P49, “There was an attempt to burn me with a cigarette by a client and tried to kill me, I managed to save myself and ran from the place. P36 said, “my father got a cardiac arrest after he got to know about me being a transgender. I loved my father so much that I didn't want to see him in more pain, which is why I left the house and came to Mumbai without knowing anything here.” This reflects resiliency and courage.

**7. What is your take on cisgendered individuals?**

There was a collective response with respect to this question from the participants. They said that the cisgendered individuals have their own life struggles, yet they are not as courageous as we are. They experience more social freedom and respect, yet we experience more personal freedom than they do. Transgendered individuals reported having faced difficulties with respect to acquiring education. The reasons are more likely being the social norms, gender disparity, poverty, lack of awareness, along with the ones faced by the transgenders were bullying, derogatory remarks. Their name changes as they get converted , which becomes difficult for the admission processes in the academic institutions. The issue of using public toilets and transmission of AIDS are the major concerns. Cisgenders are on a better end in terms of these issues than the transgenders.

**8. Do you think that cisgendered individuals have a better life and easy lifestyle than yours?**

P8, “we are deprived of a lot of social facilities and social lifestyles, we cannot go for a film as easily as a cisgendered individual can go, we need to face remarks and poor treatment of the people.” However, there were participants who spoke of the personal freedom that they as a transgender get to express which a cisgender cannot express due to the pressure of abiding by the social norms.

**9. Do you think that cisgendered individuals have a better social acceptance than you?**

There was a collective response to this question which agreed with the fact that the cisgenders do have a better social acceptance than the transgenders. P42, “If we go to a salon, we are asked to come on the timings when no one comes even if we have an urgency.”

**10. Do you think you are better resilient than cisgendered individuals? Why?**

P5 said, “If a cisgender is asked to leave his house immediately without knowing anything of the future and never going to get to see his family ever again, it will be extremely difficult for him but each one of us have

done this, each one of us have slept on the road irrespective of belonging to a good family background.” This answer reflects a lot on their courage and resiliency.

#### **11. Do you have any regrets about your life?**

The unanimous answer to this question was “no.” Which reflects high subjective wellbeing of the participants.

#### **12. Why do you feel that your life is meaningful/not meaningful?**

P40, “We feel we are special and gifted and we have a purpose here which no one else has. Our life is meaningful and beautiful.” There is high subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction among the participants. After having done with the data collection by conducting an unstructured interview, there were certain themes which were identified.

- **Education:**

Transgendered individuals reported having faced difficulties with respect to acquiring education in comparison to the cisgendered individuals. The reasons reported are more likely being the stringent social norms, gender disparity, poverty, lack of awareness, physical and sexual harassment, bullying and derogatory remarks. P44 said, “I always wanted to get educated but my schoolteacher sexually harassed me and forced me to sleep with him if I wanted to attend school. Their name changes as they get converted after the sex rearrangement surgery and the hormone replacement surgery, which becomes difficult for the admission processes in the academic institutions.

- **Social freedom:**

P8, “we are deprived of a lot of social facilities and social lifestyles, we cannot go for a film as easily as a cisgendered individual can go, we need to face remarks and poor treatment of the people.” However, there were participants also mentioned of the personal freedom that they as a transgender get to express which a cisgender cannot express due to the pressure of abiding by the social norms. They agreed with the fact that the cisgendered do have better social acceptance than transgenders.

- **Lifestyle**

Transgenders(hijra) resort to begging and prostitution for making their life ends meet. P49, “ There was an attempt to burn me with a cigarette by a client and tried to kill me, I managed to save myself and ran from the place. This reflects resiliency and courage. The issue of using public toilets and transmission of AIDS are the major concerns. Cisgendered are on a better end in terms of these issues than the transgenders.

- **Community (Hijra)**

There are social norms pertaining to the gender one identifies with. Transgenders do not fall into the cisgendered norm system which is one of the reasons why they experience difficulties in surviving in the cisgender dominated society. However, community (Hijra) plays a vital role in creating a sense of oneness, acceptance, building on the sense of self and boosting morale. Quoting the subject P9, “I go home to meet my family members, but they force me to dress like a man, I find myself comfortable when I am with my community.” It is the reason for their very high scoring on Resilience. They got their guru who encouraged them to study further and developed themselves on their own terms.

The study has some limitations. It needed a larger sample size, elaborate questionnaires and usage of additional Statistical methods like t test, ANOVA. It needed a cross cultural comparison i.e., countries, cultures, Linguistic communities, Regional, Gender, Religion demographics & professions. Correlation or Pearson r, as a statistical technique helps to know the degree of relationship between the two variables and does not indicate a causal relationship between them. This study did not include samples who do not leave their home and join the community and continue to face the stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination of the society.

The results of the conducted study can be used in gender studies. The results of the conducted study can be used to gain more information about the transgender population and gain develop a sense of empathy towards them. The data obtained from the results can be used to gain better insights in psychotherapy pertaining to transgenders. A study can be conducted including the transgenders who do not belong to the community (Hijra) and stay at their homes. Males and females can be studied individually to yield a detailed analysis of the cisgendered specifically. The obtained results validate the alternative hypothesis. There is high

correlation between resilience and subjective well-being among transgendered individuals in comparison with cisgendered individuals.

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