

Resilience and Life Satisfaction among Transgenders

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Transgender individuals, whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth, face unique challenges and hurdles throughout life. From navigating societal norms and expectations to confronting discrimination in various aspects of their daily lives, such as education, employment, and healthcare, they often encounter significant barriers to positively adapting to adversity. This study investigates the relationship between resilience and life satisfaction among transgenders. The study was conducted among 51 transgender individuals (Transmen= 28, Transwomen= 23) in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, selected through a snowball sampling procedure. Data was collected using the Brief Resilience Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. Non-parametric statistical analyses such as Spearman's rank's rank order correlation and Mann-Whitney U test were employed. Regression analysis was used to investigate whether resilience predicted life satisfaction among transgenders. Results revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between resilience and life satisfaction. The result also demonstrated that resilience predicts life satisfaction.

Keywords: Resilience, Life Satisfaction, Transgender, Madurai

Gender identity refers to an individual's internal sense of being male, female, or divergent from these binary classifications, while gender expression encompasses the manner in which an individual communicates their gender identity to others via behaviors, attire, hairstyles, voice, or physical attributes (American Psychological Association, 2011). Transgender, or trans, (also known as gender minorities) is a broad term used to describe individuals whose gender identity does not align with the gender typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth (Puckett, Matsuno, Dyar, Mustanski, & Newcomb, 2019). The lack of alignment between biological sex and gender identity and expression is generally not accepted by others because society imposes its own expectations, pressuring individuals to adhere to established social norms. As

highlighted by Devor (2004) the majority of social and cultural contexts do not recognize socially acceptable intermediary sexes or genders. Consequently, transgender individuals are likely to experience some form of discrimination or violence sometime in their lives (Lombardi, 2001). Research has extensively documented the prevalence of stigma and discrimination faced by transgender individuals (Grant et al., 2011), with these experiences having significant negative impacts on their mental health throughout their lives (Bockting, Miner, Romine, Hamilton, & Coleman, 2013; White Hughto, Reisner, & Pachankis, 2015). Transgender individuals stand out as the most visible and exploited sexual minorities in India (People's Union for Civil Liberties-K, 2001). Moreover, they face a heightened risk of experiencing psychological distress and

mental health challenges, including depression, substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies (Eisenberg et al., 2017; Mustanski & Liu, 2013).

Despite advancements in recognizing gender and sexual diversity, there remain persistent health disparity among transgender individuals (Daniel & Butkus, 2015; Valdiserri, Holtgrave, Poteat, & Beyrer, 2019). Ranji, Beamesderfer, Kates, and Salganicoff (2014) reported that apart from their unique health challenges, the sexual and gender minorities experience certain health concerns at higher rates than general population. Transgender and gender diverse individual often spend most of their lives coping with stress related to their gender identity. Up to three quarters of transgender and gender diverse youth express feelings of unsafety within educational environments (GLSEN, 2021). Research evidences indicate that sexual minorities are more prone to experience depression, anxiety, and other health challenges (Lick, Durso, & Johnson, 2013; Ranji et al., 2014). As a way to cope, they may engage in behaviours that pose health risks, such as substance abuse. Resilience is a key aspect among sexual and gender minorities that showcase the capacity of individuals to adapt better in the face of adversity.

Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) defined resilience as “a dynamic process wherein individuals display positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma” (p 858). Resilience pertains to phenomena where successful adaptation occurs amidst significant threats to development (Masten, 1994). The term “resilience” encompasses two pivotal constructs, adversity and positive adaptation. Adversity, or risk, involves negative life circumstances statistically associated with adjustment difficulties, such as chronic exposure to community violence. Positive adaptation, on the other hand, typically refers

to behaviorally manifested social competence or success in meeting stage-salient developmental tasks (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Grossman, D’Augelli, and Frank (2011) stated resilience as a predictor of mental health status that specifically indicates self-esteem, perceived social support, emotion-oriented coping, and a sense of personal mastery. There exists a profound connection between mental health and resilience (Gheshlagh et al., 2017; Hu, Zhang, & Wang, 2015; Lee, Sudom, & Zamorski, 2013). Resilience is perceived as a vital defense mechanism that enables individuals to thrive when faced with adversity (Davydov, Stewart, Ritchie, & Chaudieu, 2010). Studies have shown that resilience plays a crucial role in the mental health and well-being of transgender individuals, serving as a protective factor against negative effects such as minority stress (Testa, Habarth, Peta, Balsam, & Bockting, 2015).

Life satisfaction, characterized as a cognitive judgmental process, involves the assessment of an individual’s quality of life according to their personally chosen criteria, forming a significant aspect of subjective well-being (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Shin & Johnson, 1978). Decreased life satisfaction is associated with various adverse consequences, including depression (Heli Koivumaa-Honkanen, Kaprio, Honkanen, Viinamäki, & Koskenvuo, 2004), mortality (H. Koivumaa-Honkanen et al., 2000), and suicidal tendencies (H. Koivumaa-Honkanen et al., 2001). Studies examining the life satisfaction of transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) individuals have found that they often express a lower quality of life (Anderssen, Sivertsen, Lønning, & Malterud, 2020; Newfield, Hart, Dibble, & Kohler, 2006). Due to stressors associated with minority status, individuals who are transgender or gender non-binary tend to have lower mental health-related quality of

life and reduced levels of life satisfaction (Nobili, Glazebrook, & Arcelus, 2018).

The present study aims to shed light on protective mechanisms that can buffer against mental health struggles and promote well-being. By identifying the intricate relationship between resilience and life satisfaction among transgender individuals, researchers can inform the development of tailored interventions aimed at enhancing their well-being. These interventions may include mental health support services, peer support groups, affirming healthcare practices, and policies promoting social inclusion and equal rights. The need for this study stems from the marginalized position transgender individuals often occupy in society, facing heightened levels of discrimination, stigma, and mental health challenges. By delving into the relationship between resilience, the ability to bounce back from adversity, and life satisfaction within this population, researchers can illuminate critical pathways for intervention and support.

Objectives

- To find the nature and extent of resilience and life satisfaction among Transgenders.
- To find out whether there is a significant relationship between resilience and life satisfaction among Transgenders.
- To find out whether there is a significant difference in resilience and life satisfaction among transmen and transwomen.

Hypotheses

- There is a significant relationship between resilience and life satisfaction among Transgenders.
- Resilience predicts life satisfaction among transgenders

- There is a significant difference in resilience among transmen and transwomen.
- There is a significant difference in life satisfaction among transmen and transwomen.

Method

Design

The present study explores the relationship between resilience and life Satisfaction among transgenders. Hence, a cross-sectional correlational design was used in the study.

Participants

The research encompassed a cohort of 51 transgender individuals domiciled in Madurai, India, meticulously selected through snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling approach renowned for its efficacy in accessing hard-to-reach populations. Within this diverse group, 28 participants self-identified as transmen, while 23 identified as transwomen.

Instruments

Brief Resilience Scale: designed to evaluate an individual's capacity to recover and adapt effectively following stress or adversity. The scale consists of six items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items 1, 3, and 5 are phrased positively, while items 2, 4, and 6 are phrased negatively. A higher overall score reflects higher levels of resilience, while lower scores indicate lesser levels of Resilience.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener et al. (1985) was used in this study to evaluate participants' overall satisfaction with life. The SWLS is a 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction (not a measure of either positive or negative

affect). Respondents rate their agreement with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). While the scale is typically scored continuously by summing the item responses, total scores can be interpreted using the following categories: 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied, 26 - 30 Satisfied, 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied, 20 Neutral, 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied, 10 - 14 Dissatisfied, 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied.

Procedure

The study utilized a survey method for data collection. Preliminary information was taken together with an informed consent form. The participants were briefed about the study and made sure that the data they provided will be kept confidential and at no point their privacy will be invaded. Both the tools were administered adhering to the standard procedures of the respective tools. After data collection, the scores were tabulated and analyzed using different statistical procedures. Accordingly, interpretations were made, and conclusions were drawn.

Results and Discussion

The results obtained are presented in tables and explained under each subheading.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for Resilience and Life Satisfaction

Variables	Mean	SD
Resilience	18.20	3.219
Life Satisfaction	17.67	6.474

Table 1 present the descriptive statistics of the key variables, resilience and life satisfaction. From the results shown in the table, mean score for Resilience (M = 18.20) and Life Satisfaction (M = 17.67) reported. From the results it is evident that the sample have an average level of resilience. On the other hand, the mean score of life satisfaction

falls under slightly dissatisfied category. This result is in accordance with the study of Grupp, Blessmann, König, and Hajek (2023) and Anderssen et al. (2020). Kaufman, Taniguchi, and D’Lane (2024) found that transmen and transwomen had lower life satisfaction than cisgender heterosexual individuals. The lower level of life satisfaction can be attributed to various factors such as social stigma (Bober et al., 2016; White Hughto et al., 2015), discrimination (Kaufman et al., 2024), lack of access to supportive resources (Manuel et al., 2018; Travers et al., 2012).

Table 2. Correlation between Resilience and Life Satisfaction among transgender

Variables	Life Satisfaction
Resilience	.298*

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The findings from the correlation analysis indicate a significant positive correlation between the resilience and life satisfaction of transgenders. The result suggests that there is a significant relationship between the study variables that they increase exponentially with each other, as levels of resilience increase, life satisfactions tend to also increase, and vice versa. This finding aligns with empirical research indicating that individuals with higher levels of resilience are better equipped to cope with stressors and adversity, leading to better satisfaction with life (Abolghasemi & Taklavi Varaniyab, 2010; Akbar et al., 2014; Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009). Comparable results were reported by Vennila and Sethuramalingam (2020) among single women commercial sex workers in Chennai City, Tamil Nadu. In the context of transgender individual who often face unique challenges related to gender identity affirmation, discrimination and societal stigma, the positive association between

resilience and life satisfaction accentuate the significance of fostering resilience as a protective factor for enhancing life satisfaction. The minority stress theory suggests that resilience serves as a moderating factor in the relationship between minority stressors and mental health outcomes. (Meyer, 2015). Thus, higher levels of resilience among transgender individuals may act as a protective factor mitigating the negative impact of stressors on their mental well-being and improving life satisfaction.

Resilience as predictor of Life Satisfaction

Table 3. Summary of Regression Analysis

Predictors	F	P	Beta	t	p	R ²
Resilience	5.513	.023	.318	2.348	.023	.101

From the table 3 it is evident that the regression model predicts a relationship between resilience and life satisfaction, explaining 10.1% (R² = .101) of the variance. The predictor variable, resilience,

demonstrate a statistically significant influence on life satisfaction. While the proportion of explained variance may seem modest, it signifies a noteworthy contribution of resilience to the overall prediction of life satisfaction within the transgender population. Studies by Abolghasemi and Taklavi Varaniyab (2010) and Gavín-Chocano, Martín-Talavera, Sanz-Junoy, and Molero (2023) found resilience to be one of the important predictors to life satisfaction. Resilience, particularly among transgender individuals, plays a crucial role in predicting life satisfaction. In the face of stresses and adversities like societal discrimination, identity conflicts, and other challenges, resilient individuals demonstrate the capacity to adapt, persevere, and thrive. This mechanism would enable them to navigate adversity effectively, ultimately leading to a better life satisfaction. Social support from parents, family and other form of social support are found to be associated with psychological resilience (Tankersley, Grafsky, Dike, & Jones, 2021).

Difference in Resilience and Life Satisfaction among Transmen and Transwomen

Table 4. Comparison of Resilience and Life Satisfaction among Transmen and Transwomen

Variable	Gender Identity	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Resilience	Transmen	28	28.80	806.50	243.500	.402
	Transwomen	23	22.59	519.50		
Life Satisfaction	Transmen	28	27.57	772.00	278.000	.136
	Transwomen	23	24.09	554.00		

Table 4 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in resilience (U = 243.500, p = .402) and life satisfaction (U = 278.000, p = .136) between transmen and transwomen. This suggests that both transmen and transwomen exhibit similar levels of resilience and life satisfaction, indicating that they possess comparable abilities to navigate and overcome challenges related to their gender identity.

Furthermore, both transmen and transwomen demonstrate a similar capacity on finding contentment in various aspects of their lives. Despite the experience societal discrimination, both transmen and transwomen have access to support networks and resources within the transgender community, which could account for the comparable levels of life satisfaction observed among these groups.

Transgender individuals encounter unique physiological, social, and psychological challenges such as development of secondary sexual characteristics of sex assigned at birth, victimization, transphobia and anxiety (Nobili et al., 2018). They frequently contend with societal marginalization and discrimination, manifested through experiences of victimization and transphobia. Such systemic biases not only exacerbate feelings of alienation and social exclusion but also lead to heightened vulnerability to various forms of maltreatment, ranging from verbal harassment to physical violence. Resilience, a dynamic process where people display positive adaptation despite challenging experiences (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000), emerges as a critical factor in navigating these adversities. This study underscores the pivotal role of resilience in buffering these adversities and fostering enhanced life satisfaction among transgender population. By cultivating resilience, individuals in transgender community can better withstand the detrimental impacts of various challenges and difficulties.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between resilience and life satisfaction among transgender individuals. The results indicate a significant positive correlation between resilience and life satisfaction among transgender individuals. High levels of resilience may help individuals to navigate challenges more effectively, contributing to greater life satisfaction despite adversity. Furthermore, the study found that resilience has a crucial role in predicting life satisfaction of transgender individuals indicating the scope for tailored interventions to enhance the life satisfaction among the population. The result also indicated that transmen and transwomen have comparable resilience and life satisfaction. However, the study has utilized tools designed for the

general population thus it may not fully capture the unique experiences and challenges faced by transgender individuals. Despite this limitation, the results provide valuable insights into the relationship between resilience and life satisfaction among transgender individuals, highlighting the need for future research to develop and validate measures specifically tailored to this population. Future research can further explore other factors that contribute to the life satisfaction of transgender individuals. Research is required to outline the dynamics of specific methods transgender individuals utilize to cultivate resilience amidst societal pressure.

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