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Ecological Factors in Adolescent Transgender:Case Study

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Abstract

Gender dysphoria phenomenon is spreading among Malaysian. This case study focuses on the alternative transgender lifestyle among adolescent. Five young Muslim male respondents are involved in this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the ecological factor that influences the formation of transgender identity. Interview method is used to acquire samples, researchers used purposive sampling. The result of this study finds that peers are a dominant factor that influences the respondents to be inclined towards transgender identity formation. Aside from that, negative treatment from the mass media and family are also a factor. In terms of religion, according to the respondents they believe that transgenderism and religious practice are two different entities. When the respondents were asked on their emotion status, they felt happy, accepted and have a good relationship among the transgender community. Suggestion for future research is to study how ecological factor can help transgender to return to their original gender.

Keywords: *Ecological Factor; Gender Dysphoria; Transgender*

1. Introduction

According to Tucker and Jürgen Keil [1], gender identity disorder refers to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex. Review by Zosuls and colleagues in 2011 found that studies of gender identity disorder is mostly done through the year 2000 and above. In addition, studies showed that gender identity disorder is also often associated with eating disorders, body or satisfaction with their body size. This clearly shows that the issue of gender identity disorder is increased based on the growing number of scientific research.

Gender dysphoria or gender identity disorder is defined as a situation in which the individual has disoriented feeling on his or her own gender to the gender of the opposite sex. According Consultant Sexual and Reproductive Health, the National Population and Family Development, Tambi & Imran [2], gender dysphoria is defined as a condition in which an individual is confused between the feeling of his or her gender with the state of the individual's gender. Scientists for Social and Executive Director of the Research & Development Intellectual euphoria UiTM Perak, Adnan [3], said the confusion of gender was in reality related to the subculture [subculture] secluded than can only be understood by those who become part of the group concerned

The manifestation phenomenon of transsexuals occurs when a person is in the introduction process of gender identity as young teenagers [4]. Typically, individuals will feel different with his heart and sometimes awry when he is more likely to get along with people of the opposite sex. The issue of transsexual in IPT precipitated by Datuk Dr. Siti Zaharah Sulaiman receive pros and cons reaction of various parties to reassess this phenomenon. For those who support the claim that the soft category is limited to speech and behaviour only, even transgender contributed to economic growth. For those who oppose this gentle group were concerned that if the association between them is left unattended, it could invite to same-sex activity [5].

Transsexual phenomenon in Malaysia at present is still not accepted openly despite certain efforts underway. It invites rejection and hatred among members of society. According to the survey respondents [6], 65% of respondents are engaged in prostitution, 25% involved with entertainer clubs, salons and beauty centres, 2% involved in the food business and the rest work in the private sector. The high participation rate of respondents in prostitution to proves that they are not accepted by society due to discrimination. The Malaysian AIDS Council notes that the practice of same-sex causes AIDS is 47.8 percent higher than the sharing of needles by 47.7 percent.

According, Hairulazim Mahmud, in his report in Utusan Malaysia quoted July 9, 2003, issue of this gentle men had been raised by the Minister of National Unity and Community Development, Datuk Dr. Siti Zaharah Sulaiman. He expressed concern about the symptoms of transsexual growing, especially among university students, so much so that this issue received extensive coverage from the media but a deep analysis on the men soft still too little [7].

The study, conducted by Othman et al. [4]showed concern over the development of the issue of gender identity disorder among Malaysians. The prevalence of social issues is seen not only contagious among adolescents drop out of school, but also spread among students in higher education institutions and professionals alike. In addition, today those who suffer from gender identity disorder is seen increasingly with bold claims based on human rights. The claims to change the gender on the identification card, the demand to be a female in public and perform same-sex marriages is concerning [4].

According to Holmes & Cahill [8] adults either intentionally or unintentionally influences the development of gender role socialization of children through the family, the media and the school system. The roles of the sex of the children were initially influenced by family. Starting at the beginning of the birth until the age of five, most children are surrounded by family members. Disclosure of the difference between the sexes is based on interaction with parents [8]. Most parents provide clothing and toys as well as raising their children based on gender stereotypes that have long been practiced by members of the public. Parents tend to provide

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different services to the gender of children were among the factors contributing to the issue of gender identity disorder of their children. Reviews by Farah Wahida, [9] in the study had found that parents expect their babies to interact based on their gender as early as 24 hours of their babies are born. Nothing like this shows the importance of gender in acceptance of parents to determine the style of upbringing and so on.

Based on the early primary school boys and girls can easily recognize the gender role that is right for each individual. For example, if the young male attends classes make a cake in a group of young female, he will realize that it is contrary to the male gender. The same thing happens if a young female is playing football with young males. Children at this stage can easily segregate themselves by sex compared to their national identity. The study found that children who spend more time with friends will show typical gender behaviour [10]. This clearly shows that peers and school impact on student gender identity formation.

Review Holmes & Cahill [8]found that schools are among the factors that led to the displacement of gender roles among children, especially in the role of peers. As what was discussed by the Social Learning Theory, peers play a role in determining a person's gender role development. Peer found friends will give punishment to those who demonstrate behaviour contrary to gender [11]. The results of a study conducted by Desa et al. [12][2002] found that treatment of transsexuals often influenced by the interaction of peers [socialization process], for example, when respondents have more female friends than male friends.

2. Research Methods

This qualitative study adopts a case study approach for the purpose of obtaining detailed information with respect to the topic of study. Method interview is selected to enable researchers to better understand the role of ecological factors in shaping the identity of these transgender. The data was collected by interviewing five respondents. Purposive sampling method is used to obtain the appropriate respondents. The respondents were young men who had the character of a gentle man aged between 14-18 years. All respondents are ethnic Malay Muslims who resides around Shah Alam, Selangor. Data were analyzed using the data preparation process. The data is then sorted by themes and categories in order to understand the meaning of this phenomenon. The data have been grouped into themes relating to the interpretation of the survey data is compatible with earlier studies.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Profile of Respondents

All respondents are young Malay Muslim male and aged between 14-18 years. All respondents are students who receive religious education stream. The results of the interview also found that all respondents living separately with their families. In addition, the interviews found that the respondents were separated from their father due to parents' divorce during childhood.

3.2. Peers

To view the role of peers in influencing the formation of transgender identity, questions were concerned with peer acceptance of the respondent, the respondent participation in certain groups, how the groups help the client in daily life. The researchers gave two focuses the peer peer role in shaping the identity of transgender and also with respect to other peer acceptance. Here is how peer influence gender identity formation respondents:

... I am not a soft person original. But since companied by senior gave me makes my life fun plus he is also a gentle person.

... Senior is glamor in the school. Excellent in academic and co-curriculum. He represent the school in the national level. So I want to be like him. Most people talk the talk, but fail to have any achievement ...

... they always look clean and tidy. Maintain perfection, neat appearance, beauty and skin care. Plus their academic matter is good. So I always spend time with them.

The statement above shows the role of peers in the formation of gender identity of transgender. It is also closely related to living in a dorm factors causing a lot of time spent with peers. In addition, young age and were swayed by the character idol who is also transgender causes a strong influence on the respondents.

In the aspect of peer acceptance, all five respondents said they are friends with a lot of female friends feel comfortable and make friends with fellow men. Here are a few statements regarding the role of responder peer:

... I like to have close friends with girls, they will not mock you like the boys. And if they do not like anything about me they will politely advise me unlike the boys who are cruel ..

... I always gets bullied by boys, they love to laugh at me, mocked me when I wanted to answer the teacher in the classroom. Earlier I feel stressed with this treatment. But my friends gave me lots of advice to always be patient with their behaviour...

... usually when they taunted me I act as it was nothing. I tried to avoid hanging out with them again. I can conclude that I with this cruel treatment I won't choose changing gender but it is hard and takes time for me..

Based on these statements it concludes that peers play a role in forming the identity of these transgender. More senior transgender involvement in the activities of the respondent when they share their cruel treatment experiences with school friends contributes to the decision to choose a life of a transsexual. Review also found that groups of male students who were much softer provide very strong support for the soft students [13]. The support includes in the form of academic, financial and personal problems. The transgender students gave strong support to achieve general acceptance of them at the university.

3.3. Parents

In reviewing the role of parents, researchers focuses where parents of the respondents started at an early stage and also the parents of the respondent's response at the moment. Only one respondent did not have the presence of a father at an early stage. The statement is as follows:

... a lot of time I spend with my mother. I seldom meet my father because mom and dad split up when I was young. I only met him when we visited my grandparents' house. I feel comfortable helping my mother and my sister cook and do the work of women.

... hmm ... I am a single youngest male in the family. I was a chubby and cute kid. My mother likes to wear a shawl on my head and gave me my sisters clothes. I like womens outfit because they are beautiful. Men's shirts are very plain and colourless. I was condemned whenever I wear pink t-shirt.

Next, is the question of acceptance of the findings of the identity of the parents to their children. Interviews found that all five respondents did not have the support of their parents. The statement is as follows:

... I do not think there are any parents who would encourage my way like this. We realize we did no wrong but my parents remind me not to cross the line...

... My father is the one who scolds and many insist me to change. My mother only advise politely. I do not want to be scolded so when I am at home I stay polite to them ...

... once my father was very angry when many friends and hang out with girls. Dad did not like my lifestyle and warns me not pretend being soft.

This study shows how parents play their role in the formation of transgender identity. This coincides with a study conducted by [14] and Abdullah [15] has found the role of parents in childhood influences the development of their child's gender identity. It is thus confirmed by the positive reception and there was no confirmation of the inverse behaviour of their gender identity. For ex-

ample, parents who provide services contrary to their child's gender identity is like wearing them female clothes, toys as well as treatment to the child [16]. Further, it is said that certain teens explore and try different lifestyles with their gender identity. No confirmation or rejection of the family contributes to the development of their new gender identity.

3.4. Media

The researchers next looked the role of media in the formation of gender identity transgender. The researchers asked whether they are interested in the cause of transgender identity. All respondents generally viewed transgender or transvestite seems to be accepted by society. The society found out that their characters are very interesting and entertaining. There are also respondents very interested in the success of this transgender in their lives and businesses. Among the responses were as follows:

... I think being a transvestite or transgendered are now received and is a worldwide trend anyway. In the television program if there is a transgender character will make the show lively and fun ...

... If I could say I was impressed with some of the transgender success stories in business. We have millionaire transgender that have beautiful clothes, dress up and goes to fancy-luxury holiday.

King in 1993 has studied the role of mass media such as television, radio, video, as well as newspapers, novels, documentaries and biographies in order to 'sell' or to promote culture and information about the transgender community to the global community. This can lead to the spread of acts and activities that are not healthy on a larger scale in view of today's open view policy that allows no restriction and access to materials that deviate from the norm of society. Acceptance of transsexual characters in television shows nowadays seems to indicate acceptance of this group [9].

In addition, many television programs broadcast materials were dominated by women such as the field of fashion, cuisine and decor. Access on these areas has been injecting passion that it becomes a hobby among this gentle male [9].

3.5. Religion

Study on the factor actors of religious practice is the last factor that on the formation of gender identity of transgender. The researchers focused on whether the respondent is required to implement the demands of religion and how religion can prevent them from doing things that are completely contrary to the religion itself. All respondents agreed they still perform their religious obligations such as prayers, fasting and many others. But they still believe that everything that happens is God's will. Thus, the following is their statement:

...So far. I still pray five times a day. When I was in school I pray early, but when at home sometimes I skip prayers.

... Prayer as a Muslim is compulsory. It must executed no matter what the situation. Perhaps the prayers kept me from straying further than this. Just sometimes when people ask, pray to God but still do not like it. Sometimes I thought well, maybe my prayers have not been perfect, I wanted to do something to stop this feeling.

... I believe God ordained this feeling in me. My son did not want to have to accept. I still do their religious obligations. So I do not think of the problem too much. Maybe one day God will gave me the opportunity to change. It may take time. But I do not know how will the future hold for me.

The findings showed that respondents understand and implement the teachings in their lives. Pinasti study in 2012 on lesbians in Indonesia also showed similar findings where they still perform their religious obligations but the manner and their beliefs. It is a real conflict with a study conducted by [17] who found that a large number of respondents did not practice their religion. A number of respondents said they would pray according to the desires of the heart alone, while some believe they do not need to pray because they are sinning by adopting same sex relationship.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the ecological factor certainly has an influence on the formation of gender identity of transgender. Based on the situation of respondents, peer influence is one of the greatest catalysts in the formation of gender identity. The results of the observations and information from the respondents teachers, three out of five respondents did not show extreme tenderness. Peer influence causes them to indicate transgender identity is accentuated as a gentle conversation, loves to be accompanied with female presence and choose the appearance of a woman. Hence, it is important to curb the negative role of peers on transgender identity formation as they feared this would nourish transgender culture in educational institutions. Study Ahmed et.al [18] study showed that all respondents are not willing to return to their original identity as excited and happy with their current situation. As such, all parties need to work together, efforts and ideas to bring these people back to the right path in accordance with the teachings that prevent them from harming themselves. The study concerns the role of ecological factors to bring them back to the right path is proposed to be studied in the future.

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