

SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH OF MALE-TO-FEMALE TRANSGENDER IN MON STATE

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ABSTRACT

Gender minorities including male-to-female transgender are victims of discrimination that led to the deterioration in their mental health state. This study aimed to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of male-to-female transgender; to assess their experiences of discrimination in the society and mental health status; and association between them. A cross-sectional analytic study using both quantitative and qualitative methods was conducted among 110 MTF transgender residing in both rural and urban areas of Mon state. The study population was recruited through the "seed" respondents, influential male-to-female transgender beauticians by using the snowball non-probability sampling method. Both face-to-face interviews and self-administered questions were used. After analyzing the depression scores, six depressed and six non-depressed respondents were requested to sit for individual in-depth interviews. MTF transgender became aware of their homosexuality at the age of 10 and they usually came out of closet around 19 years of age. There were 15.5% of respondents who said they were not discriminated at all by the society while most of them had experienced discrimination through verbal or physical assaults or both. Fathers, brothers and male strangers were the one who discriminated most the respondents either verbally or physically. Most of the respondents got scolded and had family members who no longer speak to them for their transgender identity. But in schools and community, the respondents had to suffer from name calling, anti-gay jokes and crude comments. Discrimination was worst while they were trying to come out of closet and transitioning into their acquired gender. The respondents who had both depression and anxiety were 52.7%. Mental health status of the respondents was positively associated with all types of discrimination, either subtle ways of discrimination, verbal harassment or physical

violence ($P < 0.001$). Family and community were the societies that most likely to exaggerate the mental health problems of the respondents. Policies and practices should be implemented to raise family acceptance to MTF transgender; to create a positive school environment for MTF transgender and to protect them from discrimination.