

Upraisal of third sex

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Abstract

Introduction: Transgender is defined as, strong and persistent cross gender identification with a sense of inappropriateness in gender role of one's biological sex. Though they have existed since time immemorial, the etiology for this transformation still remains an enigma.

Objectives

1. To determine the average age of onset of sexual activity in homosexuals
2. To find out the reason/s for which they took up homosexuality
3. To give a possible explanation for transition of a homosexual into transgender

Methods: All transgenders who attended OPD at Institute of Venereology – Madras Medical College between May 20th 2010 and August 20th 2010 were enrolled in the study (except those aged over 40 years)

Results: 110 transgenders evaluated through a questionnaire revealed:

- Average age of onset of sexual activity - 10.8 years
- Reasons for becoming homosexuals – sexual exploitation/experimentation

Conclusion: It is a well acknowledged fact that adolescent homosexuality is a normal developmental deviation, which, most children outgrow by late teens. But, a small percentage accepts this as normal and few others are exploited at a young age to become commercial sex workers. Left with no choice they take to trans-sexualism as a source of livelihood. Instead of recognizing this fact and rehabilitating them to normal sexual and social life, most agencies are working only towards their sexual health giving them a false sense of security. This in an unintentional way is providing leverage of encouragement for their booming population.

Keywords: Transgender, Third sex, Homosexual

Introduction

Transgender (Chakkas/ Hijras/ Eunuchs/ Aravanis) is defined as strong and persistent cross gender identification with a state of inappropriateness in gender role of one's biological sex. It was coined by Virginia Prince of USA in 1970's. Though they have existed since time immemorial, the etiology for their transformation still remains an enigma and recent statistics show a rapid increase in their numbers.

Objectives

1. To determine the average age of onset of sexual activity in homosexuals.

2. To find out the reason/s for which they took up homosexuality.
3. To give a possible explanation for transition of a homosexual to transgender.

Methodology

All trans genders who attended our OPD between May 20, 2010 and August 20, 2010 were enrolled in the study (except those aged > 40years). They were evaluated using a questionnaire.

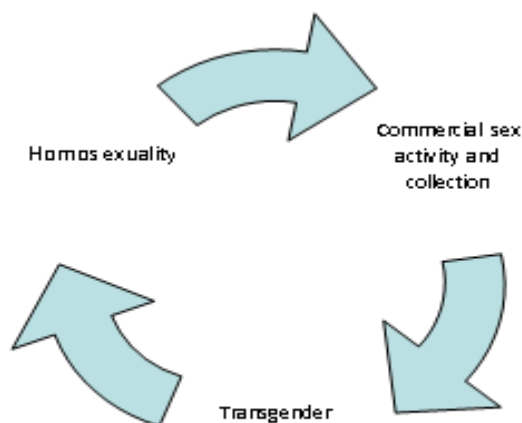
Results

A total of 110 trans genders were studied using a questionnaire and following results were obtained:

Table 1: Results of the study

Age of onset of sexual activity	5-8years: 39(35.45%)	9-12years: 46(41.81%)	>12years 25(22.72%)
Reasons for entering homosexual activity	Sexual exploitation 39(35.45%)	Sexual experimentation 51(45.36%)	Homosexual tendency 20(18.18%)
Heterosexual activity if any	No 108	Yes 2	
Family acceptance	No 92(83.63%)	Yes 18(16.36%)	
Identity crisis	Yes 83(75.45%)	No 27(24.54%)	
Educational status	Illiterate 25(22.77%)	Upto 10 th standard 81(77.27%)	Degree 4(3.6%)

Occupation	Beggary: 87(79.09%)	Commercial sex activity: 74(67.27%)	Others: 15(13.63%)
Monthly Income	<Rs.5000 13(11.81%)	Rs.5000-10000 70(63.63%)	>Rs.10000 27(24.54%)
Job satisfaction	No 87(79.09%)	Yes 23(29.09%)	



Discussion

Historically, Hijras in India had been looked upon as spiritually powerful entities who were capable of cursing or blessing. These people have existed since time immemorial as they have been mentioned in ancient epics like Ramayana and Mahabharatha. Legend of their genesis states that olden day men were castrated by kings to guard their queens. Though this practice was banished over the centuries this population still persists and is now fast flourishing.

As evident from the results, the age of onset of sexual activity in majority (44%) was between 9-12years. While in another 35%, it was between 5-8years. These results are shocking especially in our country which is considered to have a rich culture and tradition. And equally alarming is the fact that 35% of these subjects reported sexual exploitation as the reason for their first sexual experience. Most of them were exploited by their relatives or neighbours and few by strangers. Another 45% entered such activities as a part of sexual experimentation, either due to peer pressure or media and movies. It is a well documented fact and as can be seen from above, that homosexuality during adolescence is a developmental behaviour which most kids outgrow by their late teens. However, a small proportion of these kids become asexuals or homosexuals due to sexual exploitation which they eventually come to regard as normal. In our study, only 2 subjects reported experiencing heterosexual activity in their lifetime which further strengthens the above statement.

The policy makers approach for the upliftment of TG has been multifaceted, which include a host of provisions such as free housing, free sex reassignment

surgeries, pension for transgenders > 40years of age, free medical care, separate column as TG in application forms for passport and premier educational institutes. However, this act of providing social equality could actually be regarded by TG as an encouraging move for genesis of more and more transgenders. So, should this trend be encouraged when

- we clearly know that TG form a core group for transmission of STIs inspite of free and regular medical checkups
- they could create a more promiscuous society
- they can possibly lead to more broken families

Even through the eyes of a TG, the utility of these provisions still remain questionable. Our study found that 80% of them had an identity crisis and they themselves had no idea how to solve this problem. At the same time a handful of these subjects, who had undergone sex reassignment surgery (5), felt very helpless about not being able to revert back to their original sex. The Government's attempt to provide them with a separate column as TG in application forms would also be futile, when this study clearly states that majority of TG's have not even passed 10th. So, the possibility of providing them with full time jobs is really challenging. 83% of our respondents stated that their families had abandoned them. When the family acceptance itself is so low, its difficult to rehabilitate them socially as well.

Most of these subjects reported a poor educational background giving them very few options for earning their livelihood. This along with the social stigma drives them to take up commercial sex activity and extortion as their primary source of income. Even though this yields them about Rs.5000-10000 a month, 80% of them reported that they would readily take up another job, only if given a chance. This clearly depicts that they are pushed into a vicious circle of homosexuality, beggary, commercial sex activity and hence, Transgender.

While questioning, the TGs revealed to have sexual inclination towards children and young boys. This shows how gravely vulnerable the children of our society are to such heinous acts. Let's not forget, this could be the starting point for entry of the child into the same vicious cycle mentioned above.

Instead of recognising this fact and rehabilitating them to normal sexual and social life, most agencies are working mainly towards their sexual health, which gives them a false sense of security and in an unintentional way provides leverage of encouragement for their rapidly multiplying numbers.

Now just imagine,

1. How would it feel to have a TG at home?
2. Or a TG misbehaving with you in the train
3. Or a TG exploiting a innocent child
4. There could be a day when a person claims to be a transgender only to get admission to a college(since some institutions are providing reservations for this category of people)

Conclusion

This study highlights the fact that most of the transgenders are victims of child abuse and that itself drives them into a vicious cycle of becoming a commercial sex worker and transgender. It is important to recognise this fact and work on the psycho-social well being of the transgenders, rather than focussing only on their sexual health.

Suggestions

1. Sensitise people to the gravity of this situation and make them realise that today`s children could become tomorrow`s TG`s
2. Cut the vicious cycle by providing sex education in schools.

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