

Phenomenological Study: Family Acceptance Who Living with Transgender in Malang Indonesia

KurniaLaksana¹, Retty Ratnawati², Septi Dewi Rachmawati³

¹Master Program of Nursing, ²Department of Medical, ³Department of Nursing,
Faculty of Medicine, University of Brawijaya Indonesia

Abstract

Transgender is a term that refers to individuals with identity or expression of gender that different with the identified gender at birth, physically. Transgender is divided into two, namely, Individuals assigned as female at birth but identify themselves as male (Transman) and Individuals assigned as male at birth but identify themselves as female (Transwoman). Based on the results of preliminary studies that have been conducted by the researchers, the family in accepting a transgender of family members need a process that is not easy. This process involves the recognition of transgender related to the process of disclosure of their identity to the family. Family still try to negotiate to make their family members do not become a transgender. When found to rejection by family related their acceptance as a transgender, they prefer to leave the house and live on the streets. Not a few of the transgender experience rejection from their families are thinking of suicide or attempted suicide. This study purposed to explore the family acceptance of transgender to live together. The method used was qualitative research with interpretative phenomenological approach. Participants in this study were 6 and selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were obtained through interviews with semi-structured interview guide and open ended questions. Data were analyzed by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and found the results that family acceptance in this study were emphasized to the economic factors which also played an important role as a transgender breadwinner in supporting economic of family.

Keywords: *Family Acceptance, Transgender, Live Together*

Introduction

Transgender refers to gender identity that tends to experience deviations from the original gender (sex) that are inherited or congenital.⁽¹⁾ Transgender itself is a form of expression of gender identity beyond traditional gender construction in the community, where the community recognizes only two types of masculine and feminine gender, regardless of the third gender which appearance often sparked a lot of questions and controversy. This raised expression limited to the expression of the appearance of transgender, and does not lead to a change in physical appearance.⁽²⁾

Statistically difficult to obtain the exact amount of the transgender population in Indonesia because the data only show male or female gender. In 2006, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia estimates that there are approximately 20,960 to 35,300 transgender located in Indonesia. MoHof RI 2014 mentioned an increase in the number of transgender significantly from previous years and estimated become 597,000 people.⁽³⁾ In July 2018 the number of transgender recorded in KPA (Commission on AIDS prevention) in Malang are ± 200 transgender. The total number is not the net amount because not all transgender want to collect their data, thus there are possibility of increasing the number of transgender annually (data obtained directly by interviewing members of KPA).

Corresponding Author:

KurniaLaksana

E-mail: mr.kurnialaksana@yahoo.co.id

The deviations of gender identity can occur when individuals identify and realize there is something different and tend to stay within the individual based

on gender which is owned now. This resulted in their feelings of men and women on the same physical within the individual. The feeling of making people come alive in the gender identity does not correspond to their gender at birth. The alterations can be said to be gender identity of transgender where there is a change from male to female or female to male. Individuals who have a gender identity disorder in general have felt the indications of the disorder since childhood.⁽⁴⁾

The family is a small part of society and is an important aspect of nursing. This is because the family is the key to the achievement of public health degree from the preventing, neglect or improve existing health problems in it. The family also plays an important role in decision making and as a family member healthy determinants of illness of family members.⁽⁵⁾ Transgender families with children will show two possibilities, either accept or reject the child. Parents will mostly claim to have accepted his existence as transgender, however, because they are destined to become part of the family. In fact the response acceptance of each person is not always the same. This response to the future will clarify whether the family actually has to accept or reject a particular manner and treatment. Most of the family and society take a time that is not short to accept the existence of transvestites, transsexuals because the behavior is still regarded as not in accordance with the norms in society⁽⁶⁾

Gay and transgender that are accepted by their families are much more likely to believe that they would have a good life and will become happy and productive adults. It is inversely proportional to the families who did not accept the gay or transgender identity in the family. Support that obtained from family make them have a higher self-esteem and they are much less likely to experience a depression, using drugs, or thoughts of suicide or attempted suicide.⁽⁷⁾

Purposes of Research

The purpose of this research in general to know and explore the experience of families of transgender who live together. The research purposed specifically to explore the acceptance of families of transgender who live together.

Materials and Methodology of Research

This qualitative study used interpretative phenomenological method. This study purposed to

explore the phenomenon exists regarding the acceptance of family of transgender to live together in a way that directly explore, analyze, and describe associated phenomena. Determination of participants used in this research was purposive sampling. Determination of criteria for participants was determined by using the inclusion criteria (1) had a blood relationship with family members of transgender, (2) participants who were willing to do an interview, (3) participants who go through life together with transgender who had been coming out (in the stage of opening the identity of sexual transgender against other people in a span of 2-10 years). The procedure of collecting data obtained by in-depth interviews using semistructured interview guide with critical decision refers to the method of using open ended questions. Interviews were conducted in places that had been agreed by participants at the house of participants in Malang with less than 30 minutes to 45 minutes. During the interview process, all conversations were recorded using the voice recorder after obtaining permission from the participants. The process of data analysis using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) began by reading and rereading the verbatim transcripts of interviews, finding keywords, classifying the category, setting a theme for each participant, and then combining all the themes found in participants to form one main theme.

Results

1. Resigned to Accept the Situation

The purpose of the above theme implied if the participants rejected at the first, then became resigned to accept because the situation of their children is no longer able to be changed despite being told repeatedly the child remains unchanged. The family also thought that what happened to their family was a form of God's decree to their families in the form of their children who are physically male, but stuck in the female psyche. Although the family had been trying to turn their children into a genuine man, but they were still behaving like women. Initially there were no participants who accepted, but nothing changes on their children it made the family accepted their condition because of the demands of the situation and submit fully to the God's way. The word "resigned" could be interpreted as surrender completely, while the word "accept" may be approved. This theme was taken from the two sub-themes as follows:

The Providence of God

These sub-themes interpreted by participants that it was the providence of God if their child was a trans and family only can accept what was already become a providence of God. Literally, the word of “destiny” had the meaning provision of God. The following was the expressions of participants:

“... but yes, it is the destiny of God, let it be.” (P1)

“what can we do? That’s what God gives to us!” (P2)

“But this is the condition, this is his path of life.” (P5)

No Change Despite of Being Redirected.

Understanding of the meaning of the sub-theme was understood by participants that the condition of their child was different, the child was often given directives for change and act according to nature as men but still come back as a woman. All means had been in the travel began to be brought to the family of Kyai (religious leader), but the child remained there as his results and behavior was getting worse. The following was the expressions of participants:

“as the parents I can not accept I refused. But, what should I do, I have told him but he is unchanged.” (P3)

“family treat him as male, there is no change, his behaviour getting worse. The Father goes to Jember to meet religious leader for advice, my son is just like it.” (P6)

2. Accepting the Transgender who Successful in Economically

Above themes interpreted by participants if they could accept the child and their family members with the condition transgender successful in economically. Successful in economically was intended by the family as a transgender who had a job and could afford to buy a house, a car and have a lot of money. The transgender who successful in economically was believed by family as a supporter of family economy. The family has proven that transgender success in a career that practiced in the form of a beauty salon, it could directly improve the welfare of family. The following was the expressions of participants:

Could Help The Family Economy.

Participants provided an overview of the shape expectations concerning transgender family members, an effort to help the family economy to become the breadwinner of family and sustaining all the needs that exist in the family. The meaning of the word “help” was giving support in the form of personnel or money. The following was the expressions of participants:

“Even though my son is trans, he is smart in earning money, could help the parents..” (P4)

“could make the economy of this family is little better.. so true !!” (P6)

Successful in Making Family to be Happy.

Participants interpreted subtheme above in order to their family members (transgender) could be successful in his salon career and got a lot of money and could be a happy family. Happy family meant the family needed could be fulfilled in both of basic needs and additional needs. The definition of the word “success” was meaningful of work, while the word “happy” meant make happy.

“I want him to be like Chandrika who has a large salon. He is already in this condition, let him.” (P1)

“so that he can make a lot of money, help my family, he can repay me!” (P2)

“Yes hopefully he is being successful person and make family happy..” (P6)

Discussion

Families to accept the condition of their children who were transgender take a time and a long process. In the early disclosure of the identity of the family about the real situation, the initial reaction in the form of rejection. The rejection of the family against family members who are transgender had an impact on mental health. Transgender family members who were depressed post-denial and considers them useless in the eyes of the family. Recognizing the wrong thing in the person of their family members make families experiencing dissonance in the face of reality one family member of a transgender. The case resulted in families not directly accept any change in the child with ease. In this study it is evidenced by previous research that says that the family’s refusal impact on physical health and

mental health of children with LGBT. LGBT child who was rejected by the family because of gender identity issues have self-esteem is much lower and have no internal source of help in the family as a support system. (7) Rejection occurs in the family is an internal conflict and is defined as an individual whose identity is not in accordance with what is expected by their identity themselves as female or male. (8)

The existence of transgender was still contrary to the norm in society, it made the family could not accept the existence of transgender people in the whole family, because there is still discrimination or negative view of society that may impact on the family. (9) In this study, the average participant is a person according to their culture of Java where transgender people are still considered unnatural thing, that a man with the appearance and behavior resemble women. The view associated transgender people in everyday life is still considered one eye, so the family felt having a child or *anggotakeluarga* that transgender is a disgrace and it becomes a stigma attached in the community.

Other studies indicate if the reaction of parents towards their children's disclosure of sexual orientation included in the paradigm of grieving and loss based on a theoretical model of Kubler-Ross and stress adaptation. Parents can experience a number of different responses when faced with the disclosure of the identity of children and sexual orientation from refusing to accept. The majority of the approximately 89% - 97% of children reveal their sexual orientation to their parents and friends. One third of them experience acceptance and rejection and another third have parents, and a third of her leftovers do not disclose their gender orientation. In general, parents are more accepting of her condition from time to time. (10) This is in line with what the researchers found in this study at the threshold of knowing family members transgender participants experienced denial until finally acceptance and it is in line with the response contained in the theory of Kubler-ross. Family initially hard to accept the fact that one family member is a transgender but after efforts were made and the child still choose according to his determination to become a transgender families can only be resigned to the situation.

Many transgender worked hard to help the economy of their families. By having a lot of money is the only way to show the family that they were as valuable as others. Have the money to fight the stigma associated

with the stereotype transgender who only know how to sing, dance and pay attention to the appearance, but could not make a living. Besides making a living not only on income but also an opportunity to prove themselves to be recognized and socially acceptable. (11) Research on line with what meticulous researcher, that the family received a transgender family members when they can prove they have been economically successful and can supply money to his family's daily life. The views of the transgender families change when they are able to prove to the family if they can also be useful.

Based on the results almost all the participants hoped that if her transgender transgender future can be successful in a career that practiced (beauty salon) as well as financially secure. Most participants during these economic benefits are also felt by family members who are transgender. This is evidenced in a previous study that 94% of parents expect that their child be successful or successful transgender. The greatest hope of the family over a financial contribution from the others. This is because transgender who can make a living in a way that good then they will earn the respect and *diharhagai* by the family. (11) In addition to meet the needs of transgender itself they also sustain the needs of families and those who become *tanggunganya*.

Conclusion

Families who live together with transgender actually still could not fully accept. The family also had been trying to change their transgender family members to return as a normal man, but nothing changes. Families resigned to accept the condition that his son should succeed economically.

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Ethical Clearance: This study was approved by the Faculty of Medicine, University of Brawijaya with number 344/EC/KEPK-S2/12/2018.

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