



Sex Reassignment Surgery among Transgender Women in Chennai

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ABSTRACT

This study focusses on Sex Reassignment Surgery among transgender women. In Chennai Transgender Women are called as Aravanis. Few of them seek the assistance of Health Care Providers while few others get the assistance from Quacks and rest of them get the sex reassignment surgery done by senior Transgender Women. To explore the method adapted for SRS, reasons of undergoing SRS and the reasons for choosing the particular method. In June 2016, 784 Male to Female Transgender enrolled in the CBO - Thozhi, 275 in Transgender Rights Association (TRA) and 282 in Tamil Nadu Aravanigal Association (THAA). A sample size of 299 was taken. As mixed method was used in depth interviews (9) and three focus group discussion (6 respondents in each group) was conducted to collect data qualitative data. Semi structured Interview Schedule was used for quantitative study. Interview guide and Focus Group Discussion Guide was used for qualitative study. It was found that of the 58% of the respondents had undergone SRS and called themselves as Nirvanas. Of the 174 respondents who had undergone SRS, 43 (25%) of them had taken assistance of Senior Transgender Women while 40 of the respondents had SRS done through unqualified persons (quacks). Of the 35 (12%) of the respondents who lived with parents, only two of them were Nirvanas. When compared to Aquas (Transgender Women who have not under gone sex reassignment surgery), more number of Nirvanas were married to males if not had permanent sex partners. The CBOs can assist the respondents to get the necessary documents which are required for SRS. Thaimmas can be trained by PHC doctors for a surgery and also to handle the post-surgery complications. The delay which is government hospitals needs to be addressed. Law enforces should take care of the Quacks. The Tamil Nadu government has taken many steps to assist the Transgender Women. Few government hospitals also perform SRS. But still not all the Transgender Women make use of this facility. The gaps needs to be identified and addressed.

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Introduction

This study focusses on Sex Reassignment Surgery among transgender women. In Chennai Transgender Women are called as Aravanis. Few of them seek the assistance of Health Care Providers while few others get the assistance from Quacks and rest of them get the sex reassignment surgery done by senior Transgender Women. To explore the method adapted for SRS, reasons of undergoing SRS and the reasons for choosing the particular method.

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of the respondents had SRS done through unqualified persons (quacks). Of the 35 (12%) of the respondents who lived with parents, only two of them were Nirvanas. When compared to Aquas (Transgender Women who have not under gone sex reassignment surgery), more number of Nirvanas were married to males if not had permanent sex partners. The CBOs can assist the respondents to get the necessary documents which are required for SRS. Thaimmas can be trained by PHC doctors for a surgery and also to handle the post-surgery complications. The delay which is government hospitals needs to be addressed. Law enforces should take care of the Quacks. The Tamil Nadu government has taken many steps to assist the Transgender Women. Few government hospitals also perform SRS. But still not all the Transgender Women make use of this facility. The gaps needs to be identified and addressed.

Aravanis or Transgender Women are individuals who are identified as Males at the time of the birth as males but who identifies themselves as females even at a young age. They exhibit characteristics of females. Their choice of dresses, colours, toys, games, gestures, body language, roles taken by them at home all projects them as females and this gives

Age	Below 23yrs		23yrs – 33yrs		34yrs – 43 yrs		Above 44yrs
	92 (31%)		151 (50%)		44 (15%)		12 (4%)
Educational level	Illiterate	Primary school	Middle School	High School	Higher secondary school		Degree/ diploma
	34 (11%)	46 (15%)	71 (24%)	88 (30%)	36 (12%)		24 (18%)
Marital status	Unmarried		Married		Separated		
	77%		21%		2%		
Living arrangement	Alone	With Community Friends		With Parents	Male sex partners		Others
	76 (35%)	130(44%)		35(12%)	55(18%)		3(1%)
Self-Identification	Aqua			Nirvana			
	125 (42%)			174 (58%)			

Individuals Who Performed Sexual Identity Change and Type of Hospital

Individual who changed sexual identity	Type of Hospital (n=174)			
	Private n (%)	Government n (%)	Others n (%)	Total n (%)
Medical Officers	22 (24%)	69(76%)	0	91 (100%)
Quacks	40 (100%)	0	0	40 (100%)
Senior Transgender	0	0	43 (100%)	43 (100%)
Total	62 (36%)	69(39%)	43(25%)	174 (100%)

ample satisfaction to them. Though they are ridiculed, abused verbally, physically, psychologically and sexually, they wish to be and become females. Majority of the Aravanis leave home if not are forced to leave home.

They take every effort to make themselves feel that they are females and also to make others identify them as females. SRS is considered to be the ultimate step taken by them to make them and others identify them as females. Few of them seek the assistance of Health care providers while few others get the assistance from Quacks and few others get the sex reassignment surgery done by senior Transgender Women.

Objective

To explore the method adapted for SRS, reasons of undergoing SRS and the reasons for choosing the particular method.

Methodology

In June 2016, 784 Male to Female Transgender enrolled in the CBO - Thozhi, 275 in Transgender Rights Association (TRA) and 282 in Tamil Nadu Aravanigal Association (THAA). A sample size of 299 was taken. As mixed method was used in depth interviews (9) and three focus group discussion (6 respondents in each group) was conducted to collect data qualitative data. Hypothesis- There is no association between SRS and Mental Health of the respondents.

Tools for data collection

Semi structured Interview Schedule was used for quantitative study. General Health Questionnaire 12 (GH12) was used and interview guide and focus group discussion was used for qualitative study.

Finding

Half of the respondents belonged to the age group of 23yrs – 33yrs, only 18% of the respondents were able to complete their Degree/Diploma. More than three fourth (77%) of them were unmarried while majority of the married who were married had undergone SRS. Of the 55 (18%) of the respondents who were living with male sex partners, all of them had undergone SRS. More than half, 174 (58%) of the respondents were Nirvanas Villupuram and Dindugal was popular for SRS by senior Transgender while Kaddappa and Mumbai was popular for SRS done by Quacks. Chennai and Bengaluru were well-known for SRS by medial officers. Two of the respondents had done their SRS in Thailand.

Qualitative Findings

Reasons for being Aqua

Respondents who had not undergone SRS expressed that they do wish to undergo SRS but due the pressure from the family member and due to financial conditions they were delaying the process.

Resp-2- ID- "I wish to undergo operation by I am just waiting for my younger sister to get married, my mother is scared that my operation will create problem..."

Resp-4- FGD-1 - "I need to save money.... I have to earn more.... Ones I save the needed cash I will surely go for operation".

Reasons for being Nirvana

Respondents expressed that acquiring features of female was more important to them and they also felt that this would improve their financial status.

I Resp-6- ID- "I am female and until I under go operation I will not look like Naaran (female)."

Resp-3- FGD- 2- "I felt more like a female only after the surgery".

Resp- 4- FGD-2- "I feel like a female, I think like a female and walk and talk like one but my appearance is against me. That made me feel I should undergo surgery".

Resp -5- FGD- 1- "My boyfriend left me as I did not have breast like Naaran.... From then I wanted to undergo surgery..."

Resp- 4- ID- "My friends who are Nirvanas get more clients and more money".

Resp-2-ID- "I wanted to get married. I wanted some one to love me . I wanted a life alike other Naarans".

Reasons for opting for the particular method for SRS

Respondents felt that SRS done by Thaimma makes them look more feminine in nature and they were will to take the risk of undergoing the surgery without anesthetise.

Resp-IDI-6- "I opted for Thaiamma as that gives me more feminine look. When you look at people who have done operation by Thaiamma and by doctors, you will be able to see the difference. We have more feminine features and we get the structure of female...."

Resp-1-FGD-2- "I cannot allow a male doctor to touch me and cut me."

Resp- IDI-4- "I don't know why but I wanted to do it only by Thaiamma it is very dangerous and very risky. It is more like second life. Still I wanted it".

Reasons for opting for Unqualified (Quacks)

Respondents expressed that they were ready even to go to unqualified persons but they were not willing to wait. This shows their urgency to take all measures to improve their appearance as females. They also expressed that some of them do not have the necessary documents needed at the government hospitals to undergo surgery.

Resp- 3- FGD-3- "My urge to look beautiful was more and so I would not wait if you go to government hospitals it is along wait".

Resp 6-FGD-2- "I was asked for id proof and letter from the psychologist and the it is along process so I went to local doctor. (quacks)"

Resp 4- FGD-1- "I was scared to go to Thaiamma as no anaesthesia is given, I did not have money to go to good hospital and I cannot wait for my turn in government hospital".

Suggestion

The CBOs can assist the respondents to get the necessary documents which are required for SRS. Thaiammas can be trained by PHC doctors for a surgery and also to handle the post-surgery complications. The delay which is government hospitals needs to be addressed. Law enforcers should take care of the Quacks.

Conclusion

The Tamil Nadu government has taken many steps to assist the Transgender Women. Few government hospitals also perform SRS. But still not all the Transgender Women make use of this facility. The gaps needs to be identified and addressed.

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