



## Exploration of Gender Identity as Experienced by the Transgender Community of Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

Amidst the socioeconomic advancements, the transgender community continues to endure marginalization, stigma, and discrimination. This persistent social reality underscores the urgent need to delve into the coping strategies employed by transgenders in navigating identity-related challenges and to assess the available psychosocial support systems. This study investigates perceptions of gender identity within the community and broader society, and the lived experiences of transgender individuals and their coping mechanisms. Employing a qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten transgender individuals, analyzing the data through thematic analysis. The data was obtained from a larger study that explored the Post-COVID Minority Distress and Resilience in Sri Lanka's LGBTQIA+ Community. Findings illuminate the challenges faced, ranging from familial rejection to societal discrimination, including encounters with legal authorities. The perception of gender identity among transgender individuals is influenced by factors, including individual personality traits, available support networks, cultural context, awareness levels, and interactions within the community. While there has been a positive shift in societal attitudes in recent years, significant barriers persist, hindering full acceptance and integration of transgender identities. Despite the lack of formalized psychosocial support mechanisms, transgender individuals employ diverse coping strategies, including engagement with music, relaxation techniques, following religious practices,

and withdrawing from social interactions to manage distress. In conclusion, while the existing community organizations offer vital support, the study findings underscore the need for comprehensive interventions spanning individual-level psychological support and systemic changes at the policy and legal levels. By addressing these multifaceted challenges and bolstering support structures, a more inclusive society can be fostered that affirms and supports the diverse identities within the transgender community.

**Keywords:** Transgender Community; Gender Identity; Gender Perception; Coping Mechanisms; Psychosocial Support