

Gender Dysphoria among Transgender Men and the Physical and Psychosocio-Emotional Effects of Hormonal Replacement Therapy (HRT)

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Abstract: This paper is focused on examining the degree of gender dysphoria of transgender men before they underwent a cross hormonal treatment. They were given a clinical assessment and interview about how they come out with the decision to take testosterone treatment and how does it affects their physical and psychosocial-emotional changes. Case study design concurrent triangulation strategy was utilized in this study. There were three cases of transgender men who were willingly volunteered to be part of the study. The five-point Likert instrument, Gender Dysphoria Propensity Scale (GDPS) developed by the author was administered to 155 Proud gays and 154 proud lesbians with an inter item reliability Cronbach alpha of .95. Scores were tallied with a mean of 4.72 which means they have severe tendency to associate or manifest behavior of Gender Dysphoria which they undergo severe disturbance in terms of mind-body incongruence. They have the tendency to feel that they are disconnected to their body or wrongfully trapped to that body to the extent that they are preoccupied of suicidal ideation. Hence, the only solution is cross-sex hormonal treatment. The result was complimented by clinical interview and now that they are taking testosterone for at least one year, major impact and changes on their life expectations were revealed.

Keywords: Gender Dysphoria, Transgender Men, Hormonal Replacement Therapy, Cross- Hormonal Treatment, Transsexual, LGBT.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender Dysphoria (GD) is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 5th Edition, as a condition characterized by the distress that may accompany the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender and one's assigned gender also known as "natal gender," which is the individual's sex determined at birth. Individuals with gender dysphoria have a marked incongruence with the onset on childhood until adulthood and may develop emotional distress, poor self-image, depression, anxiety, social isolation and suicidal thoughts.

Transsexual as defined by DSM 5 denotes an individual who seeks, or has undergone, a social transition from male to female or female to male, which in many, but not all, cases also involves a somatic transition by cross-sex hormone treatment and genital surgery (*sex reassignment surgery*). The purpose of cross-sex hormone therapy or hormonal replacement therapy is to bring one's secondary sexual characteristics more in line with their gender identity or desired gender which makes one feel more at ease with oneself, both physically and psychologically.

According to the terms associated with gender expression, social transition refers to the complex process to exhibit the gender that corresponds to their gender orientation; this can include changing their name, changing the way they dress, changing their mannerisms, going through training to alter their voice, taking hormones, and/or undergoing gender reassignment surgery.

Transgender is an umbrella or generic term that includes different types of gender variant people (including transsexual people). Many Trans men in the Philippine community choose to undergo hormonal transition, to alter their appearance in a way that aligns with their gender identity more appropriately to alleviate gender dysphoria. To further satisfy their wishes and be more comfortable with their physique, they wanted to undergo mastectomy (removal of breasts) so they can freely go top less just like what other man do.

The Trans man is a transgender man or transsexual man who is biologically female taking testosterone hormone to appear as man as expressed or desired gender. There are at least two known transman group in the Philippines; the Trans Man Pilipinas or TMP (Association of Transgender Man of the Philippines) and Pinoy FTM or PFTM (Pinoy Female to Male). The documented pageant “King of Trans” was once featured in FRONTROW last December 8 & 17, 2014 at ABS-CBN and the story of first self-reported Trans Man, Neil Orera Nodalo, the current president of TMP in “Magpakailanman” featured by Mel Tiangco in GMA 7 last April 20, 2013.

In line with the LGBT thrust on gender sensitivity and development, exposure of the advocacies of Trans Men and their willingness to come out in the open led the author to pursue this study.

2. METHODOLOGY

A case study design - concurrent triangulation strategy was utilized in this study. There were originally 10 target participant, however, only three cases of transgender men who were willingly joined to be part of the study. The five (5) point Likert, 45 item instrument, Gender Dysphoria Propensity Scale (GDPS) was developed by the author with an inter item reliability Cronbach alpha of .95 to a 310 sample, 155 self-reported gays and 154 lesbians and it was personally administered to them using the following the scale 5- Always (Palagi), 4- Often (madalas/malimit), 3- Sometimes (paminsan-minsan), 2- Seldom (Bihira), 1- Never (Hindi kailan man).

It was administered to the three participants with an instruction that this gender dysphoria they feel was before they undergo social transition. Immediately, after the instrument was answered, they were interviewed about their feelings of discomfort, the incongruence of their mind-body disconnection. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were compared concurrently in which the author converged the quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this design, the author collected both forms of data at the same time during the study, explored the phenomenon and then integrated the information in the interpretation of the overall results.

In the concurrent strategies involve, the author created codes and themes qualitatively, then counting the number of times they occur in the text data. This quantification of qualitative data enables a researcher to compare quantitative results with the qualitative data.

Three cases of Trans Men were subjected to a clinical assessment and interview. One is Ogie (not real name) the other is Cyrus (not real name) and lastly is Boni (not real name). In this study, the pronoun “he” was preferred by the author because they have already underwent a social transition by taking hormones, with secondary male characteristics except for the breast and genital organ.

Ogie is a 26 year old registered nurse, working in a call center and started to take testosterone enanthate, (a slow acting type) for almost two years and six months. As early as four years old, he said he hated to see his female body especially during his puberty age. He even cried when he was forced to wear dress which according to him is a psychological “torture” for him.

Cyrus is a 28 year old, a former officer and a member of Trans Man Pilipinas (TMP) and actively participating in its advocacies. He is taking testosterone enanthate, (a slow acting type) for one year and three months. His earliest memory about his gender is when he reached seven years old. He started to question his genital difference to his biologically male cousins. He stands when he pees and used to straw to serve as his penis. He said that if he will become old age having that female body, he would rather commit suicide.

Boni is 30 years old, a document specialist. He lives in a compound in Muntinlupa with his grandmother and other family relatives (they all live inside the compound). His parents were divorced and he has nine half siblings and two sisters. His mother and two sisters are currently living in Canada while his biological father passed away. He is also taking testosterone enanthate, (a slow acting type) for one year and three months.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender dysphoria was an everyday psychological torture and distress that caused Ogie Cyrus and Boni to experience discrimination, anxiety and awful feeling because of the incongruence of their mind and body. The Gender Dysphoria Propensity Scale was divided into 3 factors: physical disturbance, psycho-emotional disturbance and social roles or social identity disturbance.

Physical Disturbance:

The physical disturbance refers to the female biological make up including secondary sexual characteristics of females which they find it incongruent with their thoughts as heterosexual male before they undergo hormonal replacement therapy or cross-sex hormone treatment. Table 1 presents the respondents' degree of physical disturbance towards natal gender

Table 1. The respondents' physical disturbance brought about by gender dysphoria

	PHYSICAL	OGIE	CYRUS	BONI	TOTAL
1	I wish to be like a macho man. <i>Gusto kong maging katulad ng isang machong lalaki.</i>	5	5	5	5
12	I want to have a new transformed body opposite to my natal gender. <i>Gusto kong magkaroon ng bagong katawan taliwas sa nakatalagang kong kasarian</i>	5	5	5	5
20	At the right age, I want to undergo surgery (penectomy). <i>Sa tamang edad, gustong magpa-palit ng kasarian.</i>	5	5	3	4.33
21	I want to have a cross hormonal treatment to be a man someday. <i>Gusto kong magpa-cross -hormonal treatment para maging isang ganap na lalaki balag araw.</i>	5	5	5	5
22	I feel like trapped in this body. <i>Pakiramdam ko ay na-trapped ako sa katawang ito.</i>	5	5	5	5
24	I want to have my body transformed to be like a brand new person. <i>Gusto kong mapalitan ang katawan ko upang maging isang ganap na bagong katauhan.</i>	5	5	5	5
26	I do not want to have a breast like a woman. <i>Ayokong magkaroon ng suso gaya ng isang babae.</i>	5	5	5	5
27	I Hindi ako komportable sa pagkakaroon ko ng babaeng kasarian. <i>am uncomforatable having a female genital organ.</i>	5	5	5	5
32	I want to have a prominent muscles. <i>Gusto kong magkaroon ng mga kapansin-pansing muscles.</i>	5	5	5	5
34	I wish to have a flat chest. <i>Gusto ko ng dibdib na flat</i>	5	5	5	5
35	I want to have a moustache like males. <i>Gusto kong magkaroon ng bigote gaya ng mga lalaki.</i>	5	5	5	5
36	I wish I do not have a monthly period. <i>Sana hindi nalang ako nagkakaroon ng buwanang dalaw.</i>	5	5	5	5
40	I want to undergo phalloplasty operation someday. <i>Balang araw, gusto kong magpa-opera, magpakabit ng kasariang panglalaki.</i>	5	5	4	4.67
41	I know it is impossible, but I do not like having a menstruation <i>Alam kong imposible subalit ayokong magkaroon ng buwanang dalaw</i>	5	5	5	5
43	I want to acquire a male-like voice. <i>Gusto kong magkaroon ng boses-lalaki.</i>	5	5	5	5
44	I do not want to grow my hair long. <i>Ayoko kong magpahaba ng buhok.</i>	4	5	4	4.33
45	I do not want to be in a female body anymore. <i>Ayoko na sa katawang babae.</i>	5	5	5	5
	TOTAL MEAN	4.94	5	4.765	4.90

Ogie ($x = 4.94$) and Cyrus ($x = 5$) almost shared a similar pattern of physical disturbance with a mean of 4.97 from a 5 point Likert scale. Their biological female gender brought them to undergo cross-sex hormone to make them appear as

man. They are pre-occupied with the thoughts of not wanting their body; they hate the female body, the second sexual characteristics of female such as the development of breast and having menstruation. Now that they are both taking testosterone hormones, they are looking forward to undergo what they call, “top surgery” or mastectomy.

Cyrus stressed in the interview that transman is very much different from lesbians. Being a transman is not just about taking hormones, it is a feeling of distress being in the wrong body for not wanting to live long having trapped in that body. Cyrus said, “*ayokong makita ko sarili ko pagtanda ko na nasa babaeng katawan pa rin ako, ang panget.....mas mabuti pang magbigti!*” The phrase was mentioned several times in the conversation. Ogie said, “Torture yun.” Thus, given the degree of physical disturbance was a nightmare, they ended up taking prescribed dosage of testosterone, the slow acting phase brought them several physical effect such as the following: 1. Beard and body hair growth; 2. Deepens voice pitch (but not the pitch of other men); 3. Increase of libido; 4. Increase of muscle bulk increases. 6. Increase of the size of clitoris; 7. Cessation of menstruation. These physical changes or effect do not happen overnight, it is a gradual process and it depends to every transmen which comes first, the deepening the voice or the growth of beard. On the other hand, baldness and acne may develop as in the case of Cyrus. “*Pati yung jaw ko lumaki, dati bilog ang mukha ko,*” he added.

Not every transmen experience the same physical changes, such as weight gain, decreased ratio of body fat and muscles, body hair growth, and increased muscle strength. It varies considerably across transmen and were not noticed in all subjects within the ten-week period of testosterone. Physical changes are not only influenced by blood levels of testosterone, but also by the individual hormonal sensitivity and genetic makeup (Buchanan et al., 1992).

Although, the effect of testosterone makes them feel stronger, their immune system weakens according to Cyrus. Taking Testosterone is lifetime maintenance, according to Ogie, it means that the longer it takes, the more it weakens the body’s immune system. “*Di na bale, masaya namang mamamatay,*” Cyrus revealed. Furthermore, they were advised by the doctor to lessen the intake of alcohol and smoking of cigarette because it will block the effect of testosterone to their body.

Psycho-emotional disturbance:

Psycho-emotional disturbance refers to the negative emotions illicit by transmen as they experienced being bullied, being discriminated, that makes them feel tensed, anxious and distress about the degree of gender dysphoria manifestation before undergoing hormonal replacement therapy

Table 2 shows Ogie and Cyrus’ psycho-emotional disturbance brought about by Gender dysphoria manifestation. Ogie ($x = 4.73$) and Cyrus ($x = 4.66$) has a little difference in terms of the degree of psychoemotional disturbance. They scored the same in several items, including item #13 and # 37. They scored the same in # 13 probably because they do not see themselves to be dressed like a Prince, because the country is not a monarchy or they do not day dream a lot. Both have experience almost similar degree of intensity in terms of gender dysphoria manifestation. Both of them are lucky to have supportive parents and accepted their preferred gender. Cyrus consulted his mother for taking testosterone treatment, which there was no violent protest. On the other hand, Ogie did not consulted anyone when he took his first shot of testosterone. It was only later when he revealed this to his mother. For this reason, they did not bear grudges or hate the people who dislike my expressed desired gender. They scored only 4 in #37. Similarly, both of them expresses a strong desire to be a man, and they wanted to remedy this gender incongruence. Thus, taking hormonal replacement therapy is the solution.

Table 2. The respondents’ psycho emotional disturbance brought about by gender dysphoria

	PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL	OGIE	CYRUS	BONI	TOTAL
2	I do not feel comfortable with the assigned gender. <i>Hindi ako komportable sa aking nakatalagang kasarian</i>	5	5	5	5
3	I feel that there is something wrong with my body. <i>Pakiramdam ko ay mayroong mali sa katawan ko.</i>	5	4	5	4.67
5	I have a strong desire to be a man. <i>Mataas ang aking hangarin na maging isang lalaki.</i>	5	5	5	5
9	I have a strong feeling that there is incongruence with my mindset and my body. <i>Malakas ang aking pakiramdam na mayroong hindi angkop sa aking pag-iisip at sa aking katawan.</i>	5	5	5	5
11	I feel annoyed when I am being teased for being a tomboy. <i>Nabubuwisit ako kapag tinutukso nila ako sa pagiging tomboy</i>	5	5	5	5

13	I do a lot of daydreaming like how is it to dress like a prince. <i>Marami akong mga pangangarap nang gising gaya ng paano manamit ang isang prinsipe.</i>	4	4	5	4.33
14	I really feel that I am a male. <i>Pakiramdam ko talaga ako ay isang lalaki</i>	5	5	5	5
18	I feel so tensed when parents do not understand my feeling. <i>Di ako mapalagay kapag hindi ako nauunawaan ng aking mga magulang.</i>	3	3	1	2.33
23	I hate to pretend to be a female when actually I am not. <i>Kinamumuhian kong magpanggap bilang isang babae dahil talaga naman ako ay hindi.</i>	5	5	4	4.67
25	I feel depressed every time I look at my body at the mirror. <i>Nalulungkot ako tuwing nakikita ko ang katawan ko sa salamin.</i>	5	5	3	4.33
30	I wish to be treated like a male. <i>Sana a kong ituring ako bilang isang lalaki.</i>	5	5	5	5
31	I want to express my desired gender. <i>Gusto kong ipakita ang aking gustong kasarian</i>	5	5	5	5
37	I hate people who dislike my expressed desired gender. <i>Ayoko ko sa mga taong ayaw sa pinakikita kong gustong kasarian.</i>	4	4	5	4.33
38	I want to be treated like a heterosexual male. <i>Gusto kong tratuhin ako bilang isang lalaki.</i>	5	5	5	5
42	I do not want to have male suitors. <i>Ayokong magkaroon ng mga lalaking manliligaw.</i>	5	5	5	5
	TOTAL	4.73	4.66	4.53	4.63

Table 2 shows different angles of negative emotions as expressed by gender dysphoria manifestation, such as feeling annoyed, feeling tensed, disappointment, disapproval to what they want to achieve and expressed.

The author stressed out item #11 by asking them why it is annoying to be teased “tomboy,” According to Ogie, “*Parang katulad lang din ng Negro, ayaw nilang tawagin silang negro.*” The term is derogatory in some sense, but this become the lay man’s term of the old folks. In the case of transmen, they hated to be called tomboy or lesbian because, because the term is not appropriate for their category. Lesbians has feminity in them, according to Cyrus, no matter how they tried to be male, they cannot get rid of being a female, in such case , they still enjoy being in the female body, some even wanted to give birth and have their family. Unlike transmen, they hated to be in the female body and they will go to any length just to get rid of it. “*Ayaw namin sa katawang ito, kaya ayaw na ayaw naming tatawagin kaming tomboy o lesbian, gaya ng lipstick lesbian, nagdadamit pa rin sila ng pambabae*”

Cyrus, emphasized how “nasty” or “kadiri” to be courted by a male because they consider themselves as male too even without taking the hormones yet. Now that he is taking hormone, the more he is becoming a male, not just a male but a heterosexual male, meaning he is attracted to only cis female (for a female with a feminine gender identity) Cisgender has its origin in the Latin-derived prefix *cis-*, meaning "on this side of," which is an antonym for the Latin-derived prefix *trans-*, meaning "across from" or "on the other side of"). “Cis female” is commonly referred to “straight female” in the layman’s term. “*Yung ibang lalaki kasi, pumapatol sa gay, bisexual at babae o lesbian.*”

Cyrus emotional functioning now resembles to a biological male, according to him, now that he is taking hormone “*madali uminit ulo ko, pero nakokontrol ko naman. pero di naman lagi lagi... dati din nung di pa ko nagtata-take ng hormone, iyakin din ako, mabilis kong umiyak pero ngayon hindi na. Sa sexuality, mas tumaas ang libido ko*” This result supports the study of Slabbekoorn et.al (2001) that after three months of androgen-intake, transman became more prone to anger and aggression, and their sexual motivation and arousability increased. According to their diaries, in which they reported their feelings on a daily basis, neither group experienced remarkable mood swings. Cyrus also revealed that his sexuality increased after taking testosterone, his clitoris automatically erects when he sees attractive woman just like biological males. It slightly increases from 3 to 5 inches when erected. “*Ngayon mas naiintindihan ko na bakit ang lalaki ay mas madaling ma-arouse, ganun pala Yun!*” It is well established that testosterone affects the sexual interest and arousal of adult males (Cohen-Kettenis and Gooren, 1992).

Social Roles-social Identity disturbance:

The social roles-social Identity disturbance refers to the expected social roles or identity which is opposite to their desired gender before taking cross hormonal treatment. Disturbance may affect their fashion style and preference, lifestyle, job or

career, wearing of makeup, using girl's stuff and preferred name. Table 3 shows Ogie and Cyrus' social roles- social identity brought about by gender dysphoria.

Table 3. Ogie and Cyrus' social roles- social identity disturbance brought about by Gender dysphoria

	GENDER ROLES-SOCIAL IDENTITY	OGIE	CYRUS	BONI	TOTAL
4	I prefer men's dress for my outfit	5	5	5	5
	<i>Pinipili ko ang mga damit na panlalaki.</i>				
6	I feel so stressed when people expect me to do women's job.	3	4	5	4
	<i>Ako ay nababahala kapag umaasa ang mga tao na makita akong gumagawa ng mga gawaing pambabae.</i>				
7	I am not comfortable wearing make-up.	5	5	5	5
	<i>Hindi ako komportable maglagay ng make-up.</i>				
8	I feel bad when I am teased wearing men s ' stuff.	5	4	5	4.67
	<i>Nagdaramdam ako kapag tinukso ako sa aking pagsusuot ng mga bagay na panlalaki.</i>				
10	I do not like girls' game when I was younger.	5	5	5	5
	<i>Hindi ko gusto ang mga larong pambabae, noong bata pa ako.</i>				
15	I am often teased for acting like a male.	4	4	5	4.33
	<i>Ako ay madalas tinutukso kapag kumikilos ako ng parang lalaki.</i>				
16	I feel being rejected by my peers because of my preferred gender.	3	2	1	2
	<i>Pakiramdam ko, hindi ako tanggap ng aking mga kasing-edad sa aking gustong kasarian.</i>				
17	I have a strong preference to behave like a male.	5	5	5	5
	<i>Gusto ko talagang piliing kumilos tulad ng isang lalaki.</i>				
19	I like wearing males' hat.	5	5	5	5
	<i>Gusto kong magsuot ng sombrero ng panlalaki.</i>				
28	I like doing tasks as I see in a man's role.	5	5	5	5
	<i>Gusto ko ng mga gawain gaya ng mga ginagawa ng mga lalaki.</i>				
29	I prefer to watch action movie than drama.	5	4	5	4.67
	<i>Mas gusto kong manood ng action movie kaysa sa mga drama.</i>				
33	I feel restless when people expect me to do woman's role.	5	4	5	4.67
	<i>Hindi ako mapalagay kapag inaasahan akong gumanap bilang isang babae.</i>				
39	I want my name be changed to male name.	5	5	5	5
	<i>Gusto kong papalitan ang pangalan ko ng pangalang lalaki.</i>				
	TOTAL	4.61	4.38	4.69	4.56

Ogie ($x = 4.61$), Cyrus ($x = 4.38$) and Boni ($x = 4.69$) share the same sentiments in items 4, 7, 10, 17, 19, 28 and 39 before they take testosterone. They slightly differ in items 6, 8, 16 and 33. The item 16 is apparently the lowest mean which suggests that they are accepted by peers as they were, even before they take the hormone. In several ways, they are bothered by the gender roles or social identity as expected of them by the people around them. They may feel stressed, tensed, restless and rejected as both of them experienced being discriminated. It normally happens when they enter the public comfort room. When they enter in the females' comfort room, some woman shouts, at them, or looked at them from head to foot according to them.

Most transmen nowadays do not use their female names anymore. They wanted their names to be legally changed as showed in item #39.

Table 4. The theme or concept formed before and after Hormonal Replacement Therapy (HRT)

	Theme	BEFORE HRT				Theme	AFTER HRT		
		Ogie	Boni	Cyrus			Ogie	Boni	Cyrus
1	Gender Dyphoria	*	*	*	1	Gender dysphoria		*	
2	Confusion	*	*	*	2	Gender Orientation	*	*	*
3	Family Rejection	*	*	*	3	Family Acceptance/ Support	*	*	*
4	Social Rejection	*	*	*	4	Social Acceptance/ Affirmation	*	*	*
5	Peer Rejection	*	*	*	5	Peer Acceptance / Support	*	*	*
6	Discrimination	*	*	*	6	Gender Congruence	*	*	*
7	Social Avoidance	*	*	*	7	Higher Self- Confidence	*	*	*
					8	Openness	*	*	*
					9	Self- Fulfillment	*	*	*
					10	Happiness	*	*	*
					11	Stronger Personality	*	*	*
					12	Active social participation	*	*	*

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the following results of the study, the following conclusions were made:

1. Gender dysphoria is present among transman before taking cross-hormone treatment. However, in having sexual relationship, gender dysphoria may still experience because they have to explain to their future partner including members of her family that they are transgender men.
2. Hormonal Replacement Therapy has several advantages among transman to alleviate gender dysphoria.
3. Gender dysphoria is slightly present with Ogie and Cyrus who has not undergone mastectomy or breast removal.
4. Mastectomy and sex surgery is not deemed necessary at the moment because according to them they have to spend a lot of money; presently, they are happy taking testosterone and later, when they get enough fund, they wanted to undergo mastectomy or breast removal. They always see the brighter side of hormonal treatment.
5. Several studies conducted that continuing research and advocacy of LGBT community to attain gender equality, there is a gradual increase of social acceptance in the academe, all over the place.

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