

QUEER EYE: THE URGENCY OF SELF-REPRESENTATION IN THE STUDY OF COMING-IN PROCESSES AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE OF NONBINARY TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

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INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: trans-non-binarynonbinary; gender dysphoria; internalization of transphobia; gender deconstruction.</p>	<p>The non-binary Trans identity is one of the marginal identities beginning to be recognized worldwide. Research articles and academic resources available on non-binarynonbinary Trans identities write about various aspects of the internal and external processes of self-acceptance of non-binary Trans individuals, including gender dysphoria, transphobic internalization, gender deconstruction, and environmental cismnormativity, with various concepts and theories that raise disparities and unanswered questions. In this literature review, the authors collected and critically analyzed 16 documents to fill theoretical gaps regarding research into non-binary Trans identities. It was found that research on non-binary Trans identities has gained popularity in the past decade. However, of the available sources of research articles, few studies have used queer theory to analyze experiences of non-binarynonbinary Trans identities.</p>



Introduction

Trans Non-binary identity is generally defined as an individual who does not identify with either male or female gender. Non-binary Trans Individuals Nonbinary (TNB) have recently begun to be recognized worldwide, with the rapid development of legal recognition between 2012 and 2022. Because the available literature sources are limited and have many disparities, a literature review using queer theory as a fundamental theory is essential to ensure appropriate analysis of non-binarynonbinary Trans identities. Research articles that have been made available on trans-non-binarynonbinary identities show differences in the internal and external processes of trans binaries versus trans-non-binarynonbinary. Non-binary Trans groups are often still written in the same research category as binary Trans groups, even though the two groups have different processes of self-acceptance and birth sex deconstruction. In this study, the author uses queer theory, especially the theory of speaking for others by Linda Alcoff, to conduct a literature review of academic sources that provide information on gender dysphoria, transphobic internalization, gender deconstruction, and reconceptualization, as well as cismnormative environmental aspects, which play a role in the process of self-acceptance of non-binarynonbinary Trans identities. This literature review focused on epistemic biases and injustices in academic sources and new information in the discourse on the internal processes of non-binary Trans individuals.

As a non-binary Trans individual, the author considers that the process of finding information about gender for non-binary Trans individuals is essential because there is no representation around us, especially in the Indonesian context where gender division is still very binary. Unlike the binary Trans individual who has a clear starting and ending line in his transition, there is no beginning and end line for non-binarynonbinary Trans identity because the conception of gender is not binary. Instead of interpreting gender transition as a straight line like a binary Trans individual (the starting point is the sex of birth, and the endpoint is the opposite gender), the author interprets gender as a playground that has no rules, no starting line, and no end line. For the author, gender is experimentation, experience, and curiosity to try new things in pushing the boundaries of a socially constructed binary gender. However, to get to this point, it takes a long journey that should be accelerated by accessible academic information.

Transgender individuals are defined as individuals whose gender identity differs from their birth sex. The Transgender umbrella consists of several other genderqueer identities, such as agender, genderfluid, and non-binarynonbinary. Although trans-non-binarynonbinary still falls under the Transgender umbrella, their internal processes have differences due to the rejection of the binary gender system. This literature review aims to find and then map the available information about non-binarynonbinary Trans individuals, especially about the challenges and difficulties they experience in self-acceptance and the search for a new identity. By looking at the context and position of these researchers, this literature review is expected to provide a clear picture of the current epistemic situation of trans-nonbinary identity.

In various studies conducted from 2015 to 2022, only a few have used Queer theory as a foundation, so the point of view used is still cis-centric, which then leads to a lack of accuracy in writing non-binary nonbinary Trans identities. The use of cis-centric glasses in queer gender research—specifically non-binarynonbinary trans—has been detrimental to them by the absence of viewpoints that do not negate their identity. In binary gender research, the same problem can be found in studies of women who wear masculine or male glasses. A critical literature review of non-binarynonbinary Trans identities using the Queer theory framework is essential, especially to explain internal processes in self-acceptance of non-binarynonbinary Trans individuals. By critically examining literature sources, it is hoped that this research can help future researchers in writing the existence and experience of non-binary Trans identity by removing cis-centric glasses in the framework of analysis and writing so that the implications that were initially missed can be seen due to a deeper focus on the experience of non-binary Trans individuals. Removing these cis-centric glasses is also essential for fair and representative writing for trans-nonbinary and other marginal gender identities.

In compiling this literature review, the authors explored the definition of trans-non-binarynonbinary, including its relation to Transgender and Cisgender identities. Furthermore, the author will describe the methodology used in searching for the source of the literature studied, the search process, and how the data results are analyzed. Then, the author will explain the findings obtained from these academic sources. In this stage,

the author will explain the categorization of the documents studied in the document taxonomy, the analysis of the results, and the implications and recommendations for future studies on non-binary Trans identities.

Research Methods

There are several problems behind the writing of this literature review. One of the significant research issues that the authors want to find out is how research on the internal and external processes of self-acceptance of non-binary Trans individuals has been carried out. Based on the trend of non-binary/nonbinary Trans identity recognition that is increasing with the times, the author feels it is essential to know the topics regarding non-binary/nonbinary Trans identity that have been answered, what frameworks and theories are used to research non-binary/nonbinary Trans identity, what research methods are used, and what vacancies can be filled by future researches. These research problems produce several questions that will be answered in this literature review.

Research Theory Framework

This literature review uses Queer theory as a theoretical framework. Queer theory was born out of the study of women, feminism, and gays and lesbians in the Western world. Spargo (2000) states that queer theory does not stand alone as a methodological, theoretical framework but consists of dialogues and intellectual comparisons that focus attention on relationships between sex, gender, and sexual desire. Queer theory was developed to question and challenge the existing definitions of "normal" regarding gender and sexuality in society.

Search Method

In this literature review, the authors searched for keywords related to the process of self-acceptance of non-binary Trans individuals. These keywords include "Transgender," "Non-binary," "self-acceptance," "internalized transphobia," and "gender dysphoria." The search was conducted through the electronic library database of the University of Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

1. Proses Internal

a. Gender dysphoria

(Murawsky, 2023) write about gender dysphoria or gender dysphoria defined by the World Health Organization in ICD-10 as "the desire to live and be accepted as another gender, which is usually accompanied by the desire to change the individual's body as closely as possible to the sex he wants." Walters et al. (2016) define gender dysphoria as a strong desire to be and be treated as another gender or an alternative gender different from the gender established at birth. The American Psychological Association (2013) defines gender dysphoria as the belief that a person has feelings and reactions identical to another gender that are different from the gender assigned at birth.

(Siboni, Rucco, Prunas, & Anzani, 2022) State that gender dysphoria can influence the sexuality of non-binary Trans individuals because they have specific relationships

with their bodies, so how their bodies are used in intimate relationships and patterns of bodily relationships are different compared to cisgender individuals. However, individuals who live their gender outside the polar male-female binary do not necessarily feel the desire or need to undertake medical intervention efforts aimed at altering their primary or secondary sexual characteristics in order to affirm their gender identity. (Murawsky, 2023) report that although their informants experience uncomfortable feelings towards their birth sex when compared to binary Trans individuals, there is a less obvious affinity about the opposite sex. Their association replaced this affinity for the opposite sex with the absence of any perceived gender identification.

In various research articles found on gender dysphoria, most studies base the definition of gender dysphoria on Gender Identity Disorder (GID) listed in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). However, there has recently been a push from Transgender activists in the United States to remove GID from the DSM, although the push still reaps many pros and cons. The authors consider that the categorization of GID as a psychiatric illness, although it opens access for transgender individuals who want a medical transition, raises many negative implications. In addition to the diagnosis being based on a gender binary dichotomy, the DSM-based definition of gender dysphoria automatically attaches gender dysfunction only to the Transgender individual. It does not consider the conflict between the individual's identity and the surrounding environment. The writing of gender dysphoria as a psychiatric problem also harms non-binary Trans individuals and other individuals who are then considered to have pathological conditions due to their atypical gender identity. This problem is also an implication of colonialism that eradicates gender diversity in various indigenous cultures of the world, such as in the Samoan tribe, which recognizes four genders, and the Bugis tribe in Indonesia, which recognizes five genders. The Bugis tribe, in particular, experienced colonization and massacre of Bissu, priests who were believed to be half-humans and half-gods with male and female souls in their bodies. It is known that currently, Bissu in the Bugis tribe is endangered, with a population of only 50 people caused by various massacres, including in the 1950s by DI/TOO, in 1965 in Operation Mappatoba, in 1985 in Operation Mappakainge, and the acquisition of violence in South Sulawesi by the state in the 1960s (Taufiqurrahman, 2020). The tragedy experienced by the Bissu group is one of the reinforcements of the argument that the pathologic of GID as a psychological disorder by Western countries directly ignores the culture of indigenous peoples who have long recognized the existence of gender diversity. Although gender dysphoria is one of the critical indicators in the formation of Transgender and Trans non-binarynonbinary identities, there needs to be a change in perspective that abandons gender dysphoria as a pathological condition that is a transitional requirement for Transgender and Trans non-binarynonbinary individuals.

The pathologizing of Transgender identity based on gender dysphoria shows a misrepresentation of this identity. Because gender dysphoria can only be felt by transgender and trans nonbinary individuals, accurate depictions of gender dysphoria conditions can only be done by researchers with transgender and trans nonbinary

identities. Thus, when researchers with other identities write these experiences down, misrepresentative biases emerge that then perpetuate the pathologicalization of Transgender identity. In addition, the placement of binary and nonbinary transgender in the same study directly raises comparisons and competition over dysphoria felt by both groups. As a result, gender dysphoria felt by nonbinary Trans groups tends to be considered milder. This condition is a testimonial injustice, where the gender discomfort felt by nonbinary Trans individuals is underestimated because of the limited background and understanding of the concept of nonbinary. As a result, there is a hermeneutic injustice, where a wrong understanding of the experience of Transgender identity and gender dysphoria (pathologizing Transgenderism based on gender dysphoria) is continuously produced and becomes a collective social understanding shared by the wider community.

b. Internalized transphobia

Internalized transphobia is defined by (Testa et al., 2015) as internalized experiences of discrimination, persecution, and violence characterized by feelings of guilt and shame related to one's gender identity and expression. The experiences that attack a Transgender person in their social life then increase their understanding of traumatic events based on shame, so they have more significant negative feelings about their identity as Transgender (Barr, Snyder, Adelson, & Budge, 2022). Many studies report that internalized transphobia is associated with poor mental health in Transgender individuals in general (Austin & Goodman, 2017); (Testa et al., 2015). (Bockting et al., 2020) developed an internalized transphobia measurement model called the Transgender Identity Survey (TGIS). The model consists of four aspects, namely Pride (pride and comfort towards Transgender identity), Passing (desire to be and be treated as another gender), Alienation (alienation and interaction with other Transgender individuals and groups), and Shame (feelings of shame towards Transgender identity).

Another factor that influences and reinforces internalized transphobia is Gender Identity Change Efforts (GICE), or efforts to change gender identity carried out on Transgender individuals to be the same as their birth sex. GICE is also known as conversion therapy. Data from (Veale, Tan, & Byrne, 2022) states that GICE is generally a form of rejection from the family and reinforces internalized transphobia in Transgender individuals. Their research found 1 in 5 nonbinary Transgender and Trans individuals in Aotearoa, New Zealand, had experienced GICE, with Transgender and non-binarynonbinary AMAB (Assigned Male at Birth) transgender and trans men tending to have a higher percentage of GICE measures.

Cisnormative culture also influences the emergence of internalized transphobia. Social messages that exist in society have a strong influence on the self-perception of Transgender individuals. (Rood et al., 2017) reported that in the discourse on social messages, at least six themes appear in qualitative research. Among others are 1.) Trans non-binary identities receive negative labels from society. 2.) Social messages are ascribed to the media and religious ideologies. 3.) Social messages exert a terrible influence on non-binary Trans individuals. 4.) Social messages result in poor self-

perception for non-binary/nonbinary Trans individuals. 5.) Social messages play a role in building the resilience of non-binary/nonbinary Trans individuals, and 6.) Social messages are thought to be intended to affect non-binary Trans individuals differently based on their race and ethnicity.

One theme that appears consistently in research discussing internalized transphobia is that although internalized transphobia is studied from an individual's point of view, all studies find rejection from external environments such as the social, family, media, religion, and legal environment, resulting in the emergence of internalized transphobia. In non-binary Trans individuals, internalized transphobia may be different than in trans binary individuals, so there is a gap that can be filled in research that focuses on internalized transphobia specifically experienced by non-binary trans individuals. However, there needs to be awareness and recognition that internalized transphobia is not an individual problem but rather the result of systemic discrimination and violence prevailing in cisnormative societies. The idea and portrayal that internal transphobia is an individual issue is a testimonial injustice, in which researchers (with Cisgender positions and identities) ignore patterns and similarities that arise in Transgender and Trans nonbinary experiences with the environment that rejects them. As a result, transgender and nonbinary transgender groups themselves have difficulty explaining their internalized transphobia because of their inherent preconceptions that their internal transphobia is an individual rather than a structural one.

c. Gender Deconstruction and Reconceptualization

Almost all individuals who identify as trans-non-binary undergo a process of gender deconstruction and reconceptualization (Vijlbrief, Saharso, & Ghorashi, 2020). This process begins with the emergence of awareness that identity outside the gender binary is an alternative to self-appreciation (Losty & O'Connor, 2018). LGBTQ+ individuals who initially identified as gay men, lesbian women, bisexual women, and Transgender women began to feel that these identities actually could not describe what they felt, so gradually, many things changed from their self-perceptions (Losty & O'Connor, 2018). Previous studies have suggested that non-binary/nonbinary Trans individuals conceptualize their gender in different ways than binary Trans individuals. The fluctuation and fluidity in their awareness of their gender cause no fixed and rigid gender identity appreciation but intersects with other gender categories (Vijlbrief et al., 2020).

Research articles on gender deconstruction and reconceptualization are primarily qualitative, using interview methods with informants. From these studies, the author captures a uniform phenomenon, namely a complete understanding of the concept of gender shared by all informants. In order to be deconstructed, the construction of gender must first be understood. This has led to linguistic problems in understanding queer gender concepts. Since the concepts of gender diversity are primarily of Western origin, there is no corresponding language equivalent to explain these concepts in other languages, for example, Indonesian, which adds to the difficulty in understanding the concept of gender. Indonesians still only know two genders, male and female. Although there were alternative genders in traditional cultures and customs, many operations were

carried out by communities and kingdoms at that time to erase their identity and extract the resources and products of their land. These include DI/TII operations in the 1950s, Operation Mappatoba in 1965, and Operation Mappakainge in 1985 (Taufiqurrahman, 2022). As a result, their alternative gender concepts cannot be spread and passed on to the next generation. Even so, Indonesia uses the pronoun "he" to refer to people when it is gender-neutral. Other Asian countries also have gender-neutral pronouns, such as 佢 (keui) in Cantonese, tā in Chinese, and other countries such as Japan and the Philippines. However, understanding gender is not always in line with developing knowledge about alternative gender concepts. Because Western thinkers initiate deconstructive and queer thinking, there are thicker barriers for individuals in Eastern countries such as Asia to access and understand. The limited access to understanding and knowledge of English needed to understand academic sources on the concept of gender diversity raises the possibility of a greater possibility of the existence of non-binary, nonbinary, and queer gender trans individuals than currently seen. Linguistic research that grounded the concept of gender diversity is needed to open discourse and build a nomenclature on gender diversity equivalents that can facilitate the process of gender deconstruction and reconceptualization for cis and queer gender individuals in countries that do not use English as a primary language.

Limited access to knowledge and understanding of the concept of gender diversity can be seen as a hermeneutic injustice, where structurally transgender and nonbinary groups in countries that do not speak English as a first language are then voiceless and play a role in the production and collection of knowledge about their own identity. In addition, they also lack the tools to unpack values (e.g., internal transphobia) that they have access to, even though these values may be detrimental to their understanding of themselves and their own experiences.

2. Proses Eksternal

a. Cisnormative Environment

(Johnson, LeBlanc, Deardorff, & Bockting, 2020) State that there are at least 4 (four) sources of invalidation of non-binary Trans identities, namely in interpersonal contexts, from the LGBTQ+ community, in educational or work institutions, and in the media. In an interpersonal context, (2021) writes that there is a strong direct relationship between cisnormativity and transphobia, so aspects related to gender expression (grooming, appearance, body language) can then be a tool to eliminate cisnormativity in the process of self-acceptance and the elimination of internalized transphobia. Many processes of self-acceptance of non-binary Trans individuals are hampered by rejection and elimination from the surrounding environment of other Trans individuals. Cisnormativity does not only exist in the family environment but also the educational and social environment. Cisnormativity affects the visibility of non-linear Trans groups, giving rise to negative implications, including the absence of a safe space that affirms non-binarynonbinary Trans identity, the existence of false assumptions about non-binarynonbinary Trans identity, and the absence of reference points in the appreciation and praxis of gender identity. Visibility, in general, is an issue that significantly affects

the process of self-acceptance of non-binary Trans individuals. During this time, in a cisnormative society, individuals who experience gender discrepancies are assumed to be the opposite gender (e.g., if it is not a man, then it must be a woman). However, many studies have found that non-binary Trans individuals do not experience the same (Lampe, 2023).

The gender system that is deeply rooted in today's society is the understanding that gender is a binary entity. This understanding makes non-binary Nonbinary gender a foreign concept and difficult to understand by ordinary people, so non-binary Nonbinary Trans individuals have difficulty in navigating their lives (Thorne et al., 2020). In their qualitative research, (2023) reported that for non-binary nonbinary Trans individuals, no language or model outside the binary system can explain what they feel about themselves. This makes it difficult to articulate and describe themselves, so metaphors, analogies, and negations eventually become options (e.g., "I am not a man, nor am I"). The emphasis on gender binaries in everyday life raises more complicated issues to be explained by non-binary nonbinary Trans individuals that binary Trans individuals do not experience. As a result, many non-binary Trans individuals are forced to hide their gender identity. The Transgender Survey by James et al. (2016) reported that 63% of non-binary nonbinary Trans respondents often choose not to disclose their gender identity due to fear that their gender identity will not get affirmed and will not be treated well. This rejection is also called non-affirmation or invalidation. Non-affirmation occurs when the identity of a non-binary Trans individual is accepted but questioned because it is considered incompatible with androgynous constructs or overly follows masculinity and femininity in society. Invalidation, on the other hand, occurs when a non-binary Trans identity is not recognized, its existence is abolished, or its existence is deemed invalid to represent the identity of a population (Johnson et al., 2020).

The erasure of identity experienced by non-binary trans groups does not only occur in social settings but also in academic studies and the realm of education in general. Although non-binary nonbinary Trans identities fall under the Transgender umbrella, many previous studies have considered non-binary nonbinary Trans experiences to be the same as binary Transgender experiences, for example in (Thorpe, 2015), so that the unique characteristics and experiences of non-binary nonbinary Trans individuals cannot be explicitly described and appropriately (Edwards-Leeper, Leibowitz, & Sangganjanavanich, 2016). There is a thought that the rejection of non-binary, trans individuals of a destructive nature mainly occurs in social and family environments. However, little research has been done on the role of the educational environment in self-acceptance and the formation of non-binary Trans identities. Some studies that raise the identity of Trans non-binary nonbinary in the scope of education include (Jaekel & Nicolazzo, 2022), who write about the experience of non-binary nonbinary Trans students in the cisnormative education system and (Jaekel & Nicolazzo, 2022). (Jaekel & Nicolazzo, 2022) Francis and Monakali stated that all informants had difficulty navigating sex-segregated school routines because all classroom activities emphasized "reasonable" treatment according to gender. This results in cisnormative behavior and

culture being perpetuated because it is considered good. In contrast, actions that do not conform to boundaries and binary gender roles are considered unkind, naughty, and in need of punishment. (Jaekel & Nicolazzo, 2022) offer that putting Transness at the center of pedagogical praxis can create a safer space for Trans students and build their relationships and trust with other students. Given visibility, a "both/and" dichotomy allows for using gender as a site of learning and exploration for students. However, the authors consider that the opening of safe spaces for non-binary trans is only possible in developed countries with more developed and tolerant science and societies. For developing countries with cisnormative and conservative societies, this offer may not be optimally applicable or even at all. More research and academic resources accessible to students, teachers, education personnel, and the general public are needed to open conversations about gender diversity in Indonesia so that safe spaces for other gender, non-binary, queer, and transgender people can be built. This condition can only occur on the condition that researchers can position themselves with their identity so that epistemic inequities do not occur in the production of science about binary and nonbinary transgender life experiences.

Conclusion

The cisnormative condition of the surrounding community also plays a significant role in supporting or complicating the process of understanding and self-acceptance of trans-non-binarynonbinary identities, so there needs to be a more profound emphasis and analysis of systemic discrimination against non-binarynonbinary trans individuals. Second, although non-binarynonbinary Trans falls into the Transgender spectrum, the Transgender perspective used in many research articles is a binary Trans perspective, so there is a compulsion to write down the conditions and experiences of non-binary Trans using binary glasses. Queer theory is essential to be used as the basis of the theoretical framework so that non-binarynonbinary Trans identities are no longer analyzed using glasses that are not only binary but also cisnormative. In research on non-binarynonbinary Trans identities in the future, there are still many gaps that can be filled, especially regarding the relationship between external and internal aspects, systemic violence against other non-binarynonbinary and queer gender Trans identities due to colonialism and cisnormativity, as well as linguistic construction to improve the accessibility of knowledge about gender diversity, especially in Indonesia. Self-representation and positionality of researchers are essential so that trans nonbinary individuals (and other gender-diverse groups) have sufficient space to share their life experiences as marginalized groups in oppressive systems.

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