

The Negative Influence of Social Media on Transgender Group Self-identity in The East Asian Society

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ABSTRACT

Transgender people have undergone unjust treatments due to the traditional social judgment standards of the male and the female as a minor social group, which won a lot of attention in the years of the internet. This literature review focuses on the negative impact of social media on transgender people's self-identity in East Asia society. After collecting 16 convincing articles and documents on Google scholar, this systematic literature review lists the problems that transgender people are waiting to overcome on the internet, which also offers evidence of practical reference significance which manifests the difficulties that transgender people currently encounter not only for legislative institutions but also for individuals to narrow the gap between the public and the transgender people in East Asia with actual actions. The analysis of this literature review finds that the social dilemmas which now transgender people bear on the internet can be classified into two aspects; social one, which can be explained that double consciousness and dual identity that is cultivated in the mind of the transgender people in East Asia, forcing them to balance between society, and themselves and the internal one, which they simultaneously may receive social prejudice due to their transgender identity which conflicts with the traditional social concept that wants them to fit the social expectation and challenges traditional definition of the radical feminism as well in society. Under the combination of two aspects, exposing their sex orientation to the public is dangerous for transgender people on the internet, which will further diminish their living space and receive cyberbullying due to the problems mentioned above.

Keywords: Transgender, Social media, Self-perception, Public opinion, Biological choice.

1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the most densely populated regions in the world, East Asia also has a large number of cross sexual groups. However, confined by traditional ideas, this group of people did not have the opportunity to face up to themselves and fight for rights until the social economy, people's livelihood, science and technology have been fully developed in recent years. Today, when the Internet links the whole world, information can spread to all regions regardless of distance and transportation, and the most emerging ideas can be learned even in the poorest and backward places. Thanks to the Internet, the transgender in the traditional East Asian society has finally been released. However, for them, the Internet and its platforms are not only the

"apple" of enlightenment, but also may mean greater challenges. This article subdivides and discusses the squeeze of the living space of transgender groups from various aspects, which can enrich this little-profile field at the theoretical level. In practice, whether transgender groups can obtain dual identity from themselves and society at some point in the future is to overcome these challenges from different fields.

The recent definitive books in transgender studies include David Valentine's *Imagining Transgender* [1], Patricia Gherovici's *Please Select Your Gender* [2], Susan Rankin's *The Lives of Transgender People* [3], and Judith Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* [4]. These newer studies demonstrate a remarkable measure of analytical

sophistication and maturity. A formal joint endeavour in shaping the early contours of transgender studies first took place in 1998, when the leading journal in queer studies, published its 'Transgender Issue', guest edited by the trans activist-scholar Susan Stryker.

By the beginning of this century, the watershed moment arrived with the founding of the academic journal TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly, which has been published on a quarterly basis by Duke University Press since 2014. Yet as David Valentine notes, 'The earliest use of transgender in US activism dates no further than 1991 or 1992' [1]. Despite the early 1990s rupture, the highly institutionalized and collective usage of the term 'transgender' has important roots in the history of the feminist movement and the gay and lesbian movement, as well as in the historical dimensions of the categories of gender and sexuality. Together, the gay activism in the aftermath of the DSM victory and the 'sex wars' that eventually fractured the feminist movement began to define homosexuality against what was visible among gender and sexual subcultures. These debates began to distinguish the contemporary meaning of 'transgender' from 'homosexuality' by casting the former in terms of what the latter negated [1]. As the twentieth century drew to an end, in the emerging field of transgender studies, transgender-identified scholars took the lead in breaking the ground of research; contributors came from diverse disciplinary backgrounds with a heterogeneous set of theoretical, rhetorical, and methodological positions; and, most importantly, fruitful conversations have been largely enriched by self-

reflexive insights on and a unique preference for novel interpretations of the meaning of embodiment, specifically, and the possible boundaries of human experience more broadly. As Valentine puts it, 'The capacity to stand in for an unspecified group of people is, indeed, one of the seductive things about "transgender" in trying to describe a wide range of people, both historical and contemporary, Western and non-Western' [1]. Due to different cultural contexts and historical traditions, transgender communities have not received much attention and research as alienated communities in East Asia, and there is a lack of research on their social positioning, discourse, community construction and cultural exchange.

This article was based on relative literature searched on Google scholar by the keyword "transgender people in East Asia", and 16 articles from 2000 to the present were selected for analysis in this article. Based on this existing literature, this paper will analyse the negative influence of social media opinion on transgender people in the context of the current situation.

2. NEGATIVE INFLUENCE

This article discussed the negative influences based on some issues encountered by transgender communities in contemporary social media, as well as the negative physical, psychological and communal effects of such online discourse on the transgender population, the object of the discourse. Specific articles are categorized can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis of 16 papers of negative influence

No. of papers	Context of negative influence	References
9	External Negative Influence	[5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13]
7	Internal Negative Influence	[14] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19] [20]

2.1. External Negative Influence

Due to the lack of awareness and cognitive bias of gender diversity in East Asian societies, people stop short in their understanding of transgender people while furthering the acceptance of homosexual groups within sexual minorities. Transgender and gender-nonbinary adolescents in China face significant in the online environment, these views can interact efficiently and amplify, causing people with anti-trans views to quickly congregate and deepen prejudice and harm to the trans community in discussions on certain topics [5].

2.1.1 Sexual Repression

Because of the neglect of non-normative groups in AIDS prevention campaigns and their invisibility to the public in East Asian societies, non-normative groups' safety in sexual activity is not guaranteed due to lack of

sex education, unlike sex between men and women, where prevention campaigns are always linked to condom use [6]. The bias towards heterosexual norms is one of the reasons for this negligence towards the government, which has the responsibility to protect the health of all citizens. In this context, some studies have shown that sexual minorities have a high incidence of AIDS [7]. In the absence of comprehensive public knowledge about HIV, some people easily associate sexual minorities with the inevitability of HIV transmission in online discussions, and put the blame on sexual minorities. Transgender people are less accepted by the public and have a more one-sided perception, so they are more likely to label transgender people as "HIV transmitters" and form a stereotype. At the same time, the trans community, neither fully accepted by the gay community nor recognized as protected by the heterosexual community, both physically and psychologically transgender people tend to repress their

sexual desires and eschew their normal biological needs as a way of protecting themselves [8].

2.1.2 Economic Poverty and Life Disorder by Biological Choices

The deep-rooted gender binary has led most internet users to believe that transgender people whose psychological gender is opposite to their biological gender are not really transgender, and that transgender people are only recognized as transgender when they have undergone transgender surgery. As a result, psychological transgender people have received a lot of criticism and negative comments on social networking platforms. Some on the internet argued that psychological transgender people are only a transient cognitive disorder that can be reversed with pharmaceutical interventions and counselling assistance. Some are more radical and tend to believe that claiming to be transgender will get some unexpected attention and help on the internet, and that so-called psychological transgender is the speaker's side of the story and not enough to be trusted and respected. Others see the existence of psychological transgender people as an infringement on biological transgender people, and they tend to believe that psychological transgender people take fewer risks and give less, and are sceptical about their choices. On this basis, the East Asian network has created a climate of opinion where biological transgenderism is the only way to go for transgender people, where the biological choice of psychological transgender people is widely criticized. Publicly admitted transgender people must undergo surgery to change their biological sex, which puts enormous psychological and economic pressure on the transgender community [9]. In East Asia, where the ability to perform gender reassignment surgery is limited, expensive and not covered by the social health care system, forced biological reassignment under pressure is often a significant financial burden for transgender people, which carries significant risks such as haemorrhage, disfigurement, infection, urinary fistulae, and nerve damage [10]. In addition, most of the LGBT people in East Asia are plagued by stigma, hostility and misunderstanding. Family and social harmony is the most important part of social relations, and sexuality plays a relatively minor role in building their cultures. For example, LGBT people in East Asia try to hide their sexual orientation by getting married and having children. In addition, in Japan, transgender people have been regarded as non-existent or invisible. As a result, people with gender anxiety disorder may suffer from increased psychological stress, which may affect the process of their eating disorder [11].

2.1.3. Traditional Perceptions Distort the Perception of Identity

In most cases of east Asian cultural environment, an alternative approach to transgender studies is to build on case studies of gender ambiguity or androgyny, rather than concrete examples of gender transgression. In other words, East Asian culture accepts ambiguous images and roles of both genders, and both Chinese and Japanese theatre and literature have a tradition of celebrating and praising the "beauty of the sexes". In Chinese Peking Opera and Japanese Kabuki, feminine roles are played by feminine men with desirable femininity [12]. In Chinese culture, the dominant interpretations of this androgyny craze tend to trace its origins to the gender fluidity of the broader historical and cultural context of the late Ming. This traditional aesthetic does not mean that the transgender community has been successfully accepted in modern society. East Asian societies celebrate the femineity of males and see it as an ideal model for sexual fantasy.

However, based on the feudal patriarchy's tolerance of men and its inherent disdain for women, East Asian cultures do not accept true "transgender", but rather consume and gaze upon a gender-ambiguous image. In contemporary society, the choices made by the growing number of transgender people who are aware of their psychological gender are not supported by people. On the contrary, another set of Confucian cultural circle traditions will continue to bind their transformations. East Asian societies believe in the doctrine of the Divine, which teaches that "the body is born of the parents," and strongly promotes a binary gender society in the eyes of gender differentiation. When discussing gender issues, East Asian online public opinion tends to deny transgender people's sense of identity, and at the same time, it is easy to fall into the strange circle of "blurring gender" in the traditional aesthetic consciousness from a spectator's perspective, treating transgender people as "other" and "object" to comment. It is easier for people online to comment on transgender people as "the other" and "object". The gender binary severely limits the cognitive freedom of transgender people. Transgender people can be influenced by this perception to go to the other gender cognitive extreme after gender reassignment in order to adapt to the traditional societal restrictions on the cultural meanings and social roles of a single gender [13].

2.2 Internal Negative Influence

2.2.1. Mental Depression due to Cyber Violence and Negative Information

Currently the internet has become a heated way to look for the sense of belonging of certain groups and the group's identity for transgender people. However, it is

inevitable for transgender people to receive the negative information including stereotypes and discrimination of the transgender from the majority group and even undergo cyber violence. Compared to the heterosexual individuals, the proportion of cyberbully of transgender people is much higher, which ranges between 10.5% and 71.3%. This phenomenon will lead to common negative effects including depression, decrease of academic performance, reduction of self-esteem [14]. In Japan, though the culture and mainstream religion do not record the document about discrimination towards the LGBTQ groups, transgender people still exist with a negative and hilarious image to the public and therefore enhanced the stereotype of transgender people [15]. In Japan's entertainment industry, *Onnee* is common transgender character in TV shows, referring to the people who is homosexual or heterosexual male or transgender female but dress up and say like a woman. They often act like harlequins or negative characters in the TV shows, which formats the popular negative stereotype of transgender people like they all lack of masculinity and thus hated by a part of people in LGBTQ groups [16].

2.2.2. Self-perception Dilemma under Oppression

In East Asia, due to traditional values and culture, transgender people have to face a self-perception dilemma due to the oppression of the traditional values. In China, over 80% of LGBTQ people, especially transgender people, will confuse about their sexual orientations under the pressure of family and discrimination against the public. Among the 28454 interviewers, two thirds of them cannot accept their children are transgender people, which is larger than the proportion of people who cannot accept their children are homosexual. Unacceptable attitudes of transgender people to the public may enhance the self-perception dilemma of transgender people [14]. In reality, these unacceptable social attitudes of transgender people are transferred to the high rates of bullying, violence by non-binary individuals or groups both in home and society, which is proved by a nationwide survey manifest that 92.8% of total 385 adolescent interviewers have undergone the abuse from parent due to the transgender identity [17].

2.2.3. Active Shrinking of Living Space

Another problem that transgender people have to confront is that they should accept the active shrinking of living space if they expose their sexual orientations to the public. In China, there is no accurate and specific policy and law about anti-discrimination against sexual orientation, which means there is no legal protection of transgender people from the discrimination against sexual orientation [14]. Under the effects of traditional values and culture, it is more difficult for transgender

people to join in the mainstream of society. In South Korea, a study focused on adults indicating that attitudes towards the LGBTQ groups, especially transgender people, are more negative than other social minor groups like migrant workers, defectors of North Korea [18]. In addition, the North Korean government also does not publish the law related to the anti-discrimination of sexual orientation. Above all situations in North Korea deteriorated the living space of transgender Koreans [19] [20]. Take China and South Korea, two representative East Asian countries, for instance, due to the lack of legal protection of minor groups and discriminatory social attitudes, transgender people in Asia virtually witness the reduction of the living space if they expose their sexual orientation.

3. CONCLUSION

In the East Asian society, which is slightly less open, the Internet is not mainly a place for transgender people to recognize and accept themselves, but is full of discrimination and prejudice. Cyber violence and public opinion squeeze the living space of this group. East Asian societies are still very gender-intolerant, and it is difficult for sexual minorities to survive and have a voice. In the internet age, various prejudices and discriminatory views can be amplified, effectively harming specifically real transgender people, causing confusion about their self-perceptions and shrinking their space for activism. In the East Asian social media environment, the transgender community is suffering from online violence and abuse from the mainstream community, and they are being further recognized while the online environment breeds more complex factors that lead to discrimination. All of this has a significant impact on transgender people's self-perception and balance of double consciousness, and the information and opinion direction of the digital age is affecting transgender people's self-identity, choices, and community building. It is expected that in the future there will be more studies focusing on the spiritual plight of transgender groups in East Asian societies, in order to give some social support to minority groups on the one hand, and to help promote the realisation of gender equality on the other.

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